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THE BEST OF TENNYSON



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THE BEST OF TENNYSON

EDITED,
WITH AN
INTRODUCTION

BY

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FOREWORD

The text of the poems in this volume is based upon that of the latest editions of Tennyson's work during his lifetime. I have thought it wise, however, to depart somewhat from the order in which the poems usually appear. They are here arranged chronologically by the dates of first actual printing or publication, since Tennyson's well known habit of revising and polishing his work precludes any possibility of our representing his poetic craftsmanship at any given period, except in this way. The "Bridesmaid," for example, written about 1836 and not published until 1872, cannot be said to illustrate his skill, or lack of it, at the earlier date. It more nearly represents his poetry of 1872.

The most useful guides for a study of Tennyson, I have found to be the bibliographies by T. J. Wise (1908), Charles Thompson (1905), and R. H. Shepherd (1896); the biographies by Hallam Tennyson (1897), Arthur Waugh (1893), Alfred Lyall (1902), T. R. Lounsbury (1915), Hugh Fausset (1923), and Harold Nicholson (1923); Arthur E. Baker's *Concordance to the Works of Tennyson* (1914) and his *Tennyson Dictionary* (1916); Stopford Brooke's *Tennyson: his Art and Relation to Modern Life* (1894); Morton Luce's *A Handbook to the Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson* (1895); W. M. Dixon's *Primer of Tennyson* (1896); E. H. Sneath's *The Mind of Tennyson* (1900); A. C. Bradley's *The Reaction Against Tennyson* (English Association Pamphlets, No. 39) Oxford 1917; Anne Ritchie's *Records of Tennyson and His Friends* (1911); Charles Tennyson's "Tennyson Papers," *Cornhill Magazine*, CLIII, 238 *passim*; Lascelles Abercrombie's essay in *Revaluations* (1936); and other works mentioned in the Introduction and Notes of this volume. For those who are interested in the Lincolnshire country and Tennyson's home, the following, although sometimes inaccurate, are readable and interesting: E. M. Bryant, *Over Stony Ways* (1904); Arthur Patterson, *The Homes of Tennyson* (1905); J. C. Walters, *In Tennyson Land* (1890); A. J. Church, *The Laureate's Country* (1891); Oliver Huckel, *Through England with Tennyson* (1914); G. G. Napier, *The Homes and Haunts of Tennyson* (1892); S. L. Cary, *Tennyson, His Homes, Friends, and Work* (1898).

For a discussion of Tennyson's diction by a contemporary poet, see John Drinkwater, *Victorian Poetry* (People's Library) 54-71. A detailed account of his romance with Emily Sellwood may be read in the *South Atlantic Quarterly*,

XXV, 139-153 (by Charles Kassel). Personal memories of Tennyson have been furnished recently by Mrs. Warre Cornish (*Living Age*, CCCXIII, 404-8, 472-8, 511-17), W. F. Rawnsley (*Nineteenth Century*, XCVII, 1-9, 1900-6), and Herbert Warren (*Nineteenth Century*, XCIV, 507-19). The second contains the best description we have of Tennyson's wedding at Shiplake Church. An article by William H. Arnold in *Scribner's Magazine* (LXXI, 589-601) is of bibliographical interest. To serious students of the poet's art, the *Unpublished Early Poems by Alfred Tennyson*, ed. by Charles Tennyson (1931) is of especial value.

June 7, 1940.

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Vid. Rizpah

→ Dedication
Coming of Arthur
Yvain
Death of Sir Lancelot

THE FACTS ABOUT TENNYSON

It is less than fifty years since Lord Tennyson died at Aldworth, yet his reputation has both suffered a decline and effected a recovery. During the first two decades of the present century, it was fashionable to depreciate him both as poet and thinker. The patronizing tone of several biographers reflected a popular critical attitude and the opinions of scholars. Tennyson was a poet of "innocuous sentimentality" and "effeminate grace"; he was looked upon as a thinker who lacked intellectual integrity. Recently, however, John Drinkwater voiced a modern and more acceptable evaluation when he called Tennyson "a giant among the minds of a remarkable age." Whatever our opinion, there is no denying Tennyson preëminence in that period of approximately sixty years which we refer to loosely as the Victorian Era. While the British Empire was passing through a period of literary production second only to the Elizabethan, and a period of commercial expansion and imperial growth hitherto unapproached, Tennyson was indisputably the greatest and the most representative English poet.

I

The life and work of Alfred Tennyson were largely influenced by the environment of his youth—the Lincolnshire country in which he spent most of the first twenty-eight years of his long life. He was born August 6, 1809, at Somersby, on the southern edge of the wolds that lie east of Horncastle, about twenty-five miles from Lincoln, the cathedral city. His home, the rectory, is next the "grange," and across the road from the little church, of which his father was the rector. Today, one reads in the church the inscription—

"In grateful memory of Alfred, first Lord Tennyson, this tablet is erected in the church of his baptism, at his birthplace, and the home of his youth."

The tablet containing these lines is affixed to the wall of the chancel, opposite a bust by Woolner, done in 1873. Somersby consists of a scant score of houses, charmingly situated in the valley of the brook whose pleasant voice, "purling o'er matted cress and ribbed sand," is recalled in the *Ode to Memory*.

The son of George Clayton Tennyson and Elizabeth Fytche, Alfred was the fourth born of twelve children—George (died in infancy), Frederick, and Charles, older, and Mary, Emily,

Edward, Arthur, Septimus, Mathilda, Cecelia, and Horatio, younger than himself. The father had been disinherited for some hidden reason by the grandfather, George Tennyson of Bayons Manor, and forced into divine employment, which seems to have been always something less than congenial. But if the living provided for him was meagre, the small village of Somersby gave his children a home that profoundly affected their lives. Poetry seems to have been in the atmosphere, for Frederick and Charles, as well as Alfred, wrote verses in the quiet rectory, and there is extant a sonnet by Edward Tennyson. Alfred began almost incredibly early—we hear of Thomsonian blank verse when he was eight, of Popian couplets and a play, "The Devil and the Lady" (recently published for the first time) at the age of fourteen. Perhaps the father's influence was as important as that of environment; for George Clayton Tennyson was a person of exceptional learning and endowments to be the rector in so small and unpretentious a "living." Unquestionably his children, including the future laureate, received most of their education at home. Alfred acquired some formal training, however, at a grammar school at Louth, between the summer of 1816 and Christmas of 1820. Yet one must feel that the dominating religious impressions of his home, and the beauty of the natural scenery surrounding Somersby and Maplethorpe (the seaside resort thirteen miles east, to which the family repaired for its annual holidays) combined with his naturally quick and accurate observation, prepared Tennyson in no small degree for the career of poet.

In 1826 (December) Alfred and Charles made their debut as poets by publishing a slender volume entitled *Poems by Two Brothers* (post-dated 1827), which actually contained poems by three brothers, since four of those included were the work of Frederick. Jackson, a bookseller of Louth, gave the boys twenty pounds for it. Inasmuch as Charles was eighteen and Alfred was seventeen, it is obvious that they struck a bargain with the publisher. The poems, juvenile as they were, received not unfavorable notice in the *Literary Chronicle* and the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

In the next year Charles and Alfred joined Frederick at Trinity College, Cambridge, where the eldest brother had already won a medal for a Greek ode on the pyramids. During his second year, Alfred secured the Vice-Chancellor's Medal Prize for a poem on an assigned subject, "Timbuctoo," entering the competition at his father's request. Among the rival poets were several of his later "apostolic" friends—Milnes, Hallam, and George Stovin Venables, the last of whom won a corresponding prize two years later, in spite of the competition of Swinburne. The only notable thing about Tennyson's *Timbuctoo* was the fact that it was in Miltonic blank verse, and (with Hallam's poem in *terza rima*) violated the tradition that all such prize poems should be in Popian couplets. It should be noted in passing that

Thackeray's burlesque *Timbuctoo*, which appeared in the Cambridge *Snob*, was not in any sense a parody of Tennyson's poem (as often stated) but was rather a travesty of the usual prize poem in couplets.

Timbuctoo made Tennyson a personage at Cambridge and brought about his election to the exclusive and brilliant society of the "Apostles." Arthur Hallam, R. C. Trench, Edmund Lushington, Frederick D. Maurice, Henry Alford, R. M. Milnes, and James Spedding thus became his intimates—both an inspiration and detriment to his developing talents as a poet. It has been conjectured with some plausibility that Tennyson's worst faults in his early volumes (1832 or before) were due to the injudicious praise of the Apostles, especially of Hallam. Be that as it may, it is probable that he would not have become the most melodious singer of the period but for the encouragement they gave him—the needful support they furnished for his determination to become a poet. Others outside the Apostles' group, like Thackeray and Edward Fitzgerald, soon became his friends. Tennyson (unlike his beloved Hallam, who had rooms in New Court) lived outside the college, at first in Rose Crescent and then in Trumpington Street.

In 1829 many of the Apostles came in contact with General Torrijos, the Spanish revolutionist, who, with other refugees, was in London. Aroused by the wrongs of Torrijos and the Spanish liberals, several of the Apostles, including John Mitchell Kemble, R. C. Trench, Hallam and Tennyson, determined, with youthful lack of regard for consequences, to carry aid and encouragement to those who were in revolt against the reactionary King Ferdinand. An Apostle of an earlier academic generation, John Sterling, and his cousin Robert Boyd, were the main movers in the conspiracy. Inspired by them, Tennyson and Hallam journeyed through France to the Spanish border in July 1830, carrying messages and money to Señor Ojeda, an ally of Torrijos, whose headquarters were in the Pyrenees. It was a brave but foolhardy gesture of the youthful enthusiasts. Robert Boyd, Torrijos himself, and fifty others were later caught and executed in 1831. But before this disaster occurred, Hallam and Tennyson, like Wordsworth in France and Byron in Greece, were disillusioned painfully by a closer acquaintance with the revolutionists they had risked their lives to help. They escaped without mishap, however, and returned to Cambridge sobered by the experience. The visit to the Pyrenees produced at least three direct results in Tennyson's verse; but its larger value in the experience of the poet has been generally overlooked. Henry Hallam in the *Memoir* of his son gives one line to it, and Tennyson's son and biographer dismisses the incident in three pages. Yet its effect on the poet was profound; and it further bound him to his beloved Hallam.

II

Tennyson's first independent collection of verse appeared in 1830, with the title *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, and bore the author's name. The young poet did not lack encouragement. Reviews of the volume followed, in the *Westminster Review* (Jan. 1831) in *Blackwood's Magazine* (May 1832) in Leigh Hunt's *Tatler* (March 1831) and in Moxon's *Englishman's Magazine* (August 1831), the last a laudatory notice by Arthur Hallam. The original design had been to include poems by Hallam in the volume, but Henry Hallam, the father, objected. Without commenting upon this fact, one must connect it with the elder Hallam's obvious opposition to his son's attachment to Emily Tennyson (he made no mention of the engagement in his *Memoir* of his son, and suppressed many of the latter's love poems) and his destruction after Arthur's death of all Tennyson's letters to him. Only the extraordinary snobbishness of an English aristocrat can explain this attitude of Henry Hallam toward his son's intimacy with the young poet. Wordsworth is said to have seen promise, not only in the poems of Alfred Tennyson at this time, but also in those of his brother Charles, whose sonnets and fugitive pieces were published in the same year.

For Cambridge, Tennyson had no great love. Like Macaulay, he rebelled at the antiquated lore of his teachers, feeling that it unfitted for life. With few regrets, apparently, he left the University in February, 1831, without taking a degree, because of the failing health of his father. Lincolnshire, which received him again, was not without its attractions. Emily Sellwood, whom he had met in 1830, was only six miles from Somersby, living at Horncastle, where her father was a solicitor. Arthur Hallam was by this time visiting Somersby frequently, partly because of Emilia ("Emily") Tennyson, to whom he had become deeply attached (see note on *In Memoriam*). When his father died, on March 16, 1831, Tennyson settled quietly at home, to write and to act, incidentally, as head of the house, since his two older brothers were away. He enjoyed a small circle of friends, and steadily worked on what was to be his 1832-3 volume of poems. Occasionally he went on a journey with Hallam, or visited some of his university friends. Tennyson had by this time deliberately consecrated himself to poetry.

Hallam had, in 1830, wished to become formally engaged to Emily Tennyson (see Hallam's fine poems, "The Two Sisters," "To the Loved One," and "O blessing and delight of my young heart."—*Remains of Arthur Hallam*, 128, 136, and 105). His parents stipulated, however, that the young people should be entirely separated for a year, until Arthur should be of age, as a test of their judgment and affection, before an engagement should be announced. Their love

survived the test, and the announcement was made in February 1831. After this event, Hallam spent much time in Somersby, and in 1832 accompanied Tennyson on a visit to the Rhine. In the meantime Tennyson was bringing out his *Poems*, post-dated 1833, but published in November 1832. Although the volume contained some of the very poems which in later years were adjudged his finest lyrics, at this time and in the form in which they appeared, they were criticised with almost universal derision. Savage and malicious derogation by John Wilson Croker in the *Quarterly Review*, and by "Christopher North" (John Wilson) in *Blackwood's*, was accompanied by less severe criticism in the *Athenæum*, the *Spectator* and the *Literary Gazette*. Only W. J. Fox in the *Monthly Repository* found praise for them. Tennyson, who had from his early school days been notoriously sensitive to adverse criticism, was shocked into hurt silence for a period of nearly ten years. Not until he was absolutely sure of his poetic touch did he venture to publish another volume of poems.

But a much more serious blow fell soon afterward upon Tennyson, and darkened his life for many years. Arthur Hallam, his dearest friend, on a European tour with his father, died suddenly in Vienna, on September 15, 1833, apparently succumbing to an hereditary weakness (only one of eleven Hallam children reached the age of 26). His body was brought back to the ancestral home of the Eltons (Mrs. Hallam was daughter of Sir Abraham Elton, Bart., of Clevedon Court) and buried in the manor aisle of the parish Church of St. Andrew, Clevedon, on January 3, 1834. Arthur Hallam was twenty-two years of age when he died, two years younger than Tennyson. The effect of his death on the poet is eloquently revealed in *The Two Voices*, *Ulysses*, "*Break, break, break*," *In Memoriam*, and by allusions in many other poems. Arthur's betrothed, Emily Tennyson, lived at the home of the Hallams for a time, as their own daughter. About nine years after Arthur's death, she married (January 1842) a young naval officer named Richard Jesse—eight years, it will be noted, before *In Memoriam* was published. Tennyson, for this reason, perhaps, makes no direct mention of her in the poem.

It is almost impossible to account for Tennyson's exalted opinion of Arthur Hallam—a young man two years younger than himself and certainly less gifted. It is no less difficult to understand why other contemporaries regarded Hallam so highly. *In Memoriam* gives the impression that the world endured a far-reaching and irremediable loss by Hallam's early decease. Gladstone and others who had known Arthur felt that Tennyson had not over-stated the case. It is likely that Hallam's reputation was attributable, for the most part, to the light shed upon him by his father's reputation; to the charm of his personality which unsettled the judgment of his friends; to his precocity represented not only by his

poems in Italian as well as English, but also by his philosophical work, the *Theodicaea Novissima*; to the fact that his poems were regarded as superior to the poetry of Tennyson written at the same age; to his reputation as an orator at Eton and Cambridge; to the faith of his friends in his unusual critical abilities; and to the fact that he died before his promise was fulfilled, thus giving the imaginations of his friends an opportunity to create a Hallam who never did exist and never would have existed. In the poem, *In Memoriam*, Tennyson succeeds only in explaining his own feelings. Although the verses themselves give evidence that Tennyson worked on parts of the poem soon after Hallam's death, the first mention of *In Memoriam* is found in a letter to J. M. Heath, dated 1835. For fifteen years after this Tennyson revised and perfected and added to his elegy. It was a labor of love—not a formal elegiac, but

. . . Short swallow-flights of song,
That dip their wings in tears and fly away.

In 1836 and 1837, he contributed to the *Tribute* and the *Keepsake*, two "Annuals"; but after the critical attacks of 1833 he published nothing more in book form until 1842.

III

The romance with Emily Sellwood was given fresh impetus by Tennyson's meeting with her at Horncastle, May 24, 1836, when his brother Charles married Louisa Sellwood, a younger sister, at St. Mary's Church. The wedding is alluded to in *In Memoriam*, XCVII. Emily was bridesmaid, and a poem of Tennyson's, not published until 1872, celebrated the event. James Spedding, one of the "Apostles" of Trinity College, had become one of Tennyson's closest friends, (see the poem *To J. S.*) and in 1837 the poet paid a visit to Spedding's home, "Mirehouse" in Cumberland. Later in the same year, the Tennysons were forced to leave Somersby. The removal was painful to all—their feelings are suggested in *In Memoriam* CI to CIV. The rectory in the tiny village was the only dwelling the Tennyson children had ever known. All had grown to manhood and womanhood amid the gentle landscapes of this "one dear neighborhood." To Alfred and Emily, at least, the scenes about Somersby were inevitably associated with memories of Hallam and his visits to their home. They went from it regretfully to a place where all was "new unhallowed ground."

High Beech, in Epping Forest, gave them an unsatisfactory home for three years, and then in quick succession, Tunbridge Wells, Boxley, near Maidstone, and Cheltenham. During these years, Tennyson was much in and out of London, frequently visiting Spedding at Lincoln's Inn, often foregathering with intimates of the Anonymous Club, with Carlyle, Rogers, "Barry Cornwall," J. S. Mill, Allan Cun-

ningham, Macready, John Forster, Thackeray, Landor, and John Sterling. Sometimes he dined with friends at the Cock Tavern, an old Pepysian resort, partook of the "pint of generous port" and smoked his pipe, while conversation canvassed heaven and earth. (Other intimates of these days were Maclise, the two Lushingtons, Dickens, Leigh Hunt, Campbell, Fitzgerald and William Ewart Gladstone.) But heart-warming as such friendships must have been at this time in his life, they could not offset the disquietude caused by one event that occurred about 1840. The father of Emily Sellwood, feeling that the impecunious poet had no prospects which justified his pretensions to her hand, persuaded Emily to break off the engagement and discontinue correspondence with Tennyson. The poet's subsequent bitterness against parental interference in matters of love is seen to have been deeply rooted in personal experience—*Locksley Hall*, *Dora*, *Aylmer's Field*, and *Maud* reflect the resentment of Tennyson, not only because of his own affair, but also because of the experience of Emily Tennyson and Hallam.

The year 1842 saw the publication of Tennyson's *Poems*, in two volumes—the first volume made up chiefly of earlier poems revised, the second, with two exceptions, of new poems. The publication brought him fame—the reward of his ten years of silent effort. Three of his Cambridge Apostle friends virtually monopolized the most important reviews in their efforts to do him critical service. James Spedding in the *Edinburgh Review*, John Sterling in the *Quarterly Review*, and Richard Monckton Milnes in the *Westminster*, built up a defense of friendly appreciation to overshadow any adverse opinions that might be expressed. This was probably done deliberately; at least, it suggests friendly conspiracy. But the efforts of the Apostles were hardly needed. Edgar Allan Poe, two years later, in the *American Democratic Review*, said "I am not sure that Tennyson is not the greatest of poets." Dickens, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Elizabeth Barrett, as well as other contemporaries, voiced their approval; Carlyle and other friends wrote him letters of praise. Even the aged Wordsworth was so impressed with the work that he called him, "decidedly the first of our living poets." From this time, Tennyson's fame was secure.

Unfortunately, he lost most of his slender funds, and a little estate at Grasby, which he had invested while at Epping in a philanthropic wood-carving business; but his brother-in-law, Edmund Lushington, helped him to recover something from the wreck. In 1844, he was granted a government civil list pension of two hundred pounds a year, secured for him by Sir Robert Peel, chiefly through the intervention of Carlyle and Henry Hallam. He was attacked by Bulwer-Lytton in the *New Timon* for accepting it, and answered him in his *New Timon and the Poets* (*Punch*, February 28)—the only real satire Tennyson ever wrote.

16 THE FACTS ABOUT TENNYSON

The Princess was a bid for popularity, for Tennyson was a recognized but not yet popular poet. It was finished and published in 1847. The poem was poorly calculated to appeal to the mass of English readers, however; and, curiously enough, *In Memoriam*, which was not intended for popular fame, did more than *The Princess* to make Tennyson's name a household word. In 1848, the poet made tours in Cornwall and Ireland. In these and later tours to Glastonbury, Wales, and southwestern England, he absorbed the detail of that natural background which he so effectively wove into his *Idylls of the King*.

IV

In Memoriam first appeared in print in early June, 1850. Tennyson was extremely reticent about it before and after publication. It was published by Moxon, without the author's name in the advertisements or on the title page. Moxon was a man of business, however, and he let it be known that Tennyson was the author, although this could be readily guessed. It was at first thought, in some quarters, to be the work of a woman. Only two adverse criticisms appeared—one in the *London Times* and the other in the *American Quarterly Review* (October 1850). Both were inspired by what were regarded as skeptical utterances in an otherwise orthodox poem. Approved by a chorus of critical voices, *In Memoriam* steadily grew in public favor. Mudie's Library (recently established in London) advertised fifty copies for circulation. Before a year had passed, three large editions had been sold.

Almost coincident with the publication of *In Memoriam* was Tennyson's marriage to Emily Sellwood (June 13) in Shiplake Church, near Henley-on-the-Thames, in Oxfordshire. She was thirty-seven years of age; he, forty-one. They first made their home at Warringlid in Sussex, (seven miles from Horsham); after which they removed to Chapel House, Montpelier Row, Twickenham. In November, Tennyson accepted the Poet Laureateship, made vacant by the death of Wordsworth (died April 23) and a few months later, on March 6, 1851, was presented to the Queen at Buckingham Palace. After the death of a first child at birth, Tennyson and his wife made a tour of Italy, visiting Elizabeth and Robert Browning at Paris on their return. In August, 1852, Hallam Tennyson (died December 3, 1928) was born at Twickenham; while in November of that year Tennyson's splendid *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* was published. The *Ode* proved that the Laureate was a great "occasional" poet and a worthy incumbent of the much-derided Laureate's office.

For some time, the Tennysons had busied themselves in a search for a permanent residence. This they discovered in 1853 in "Farringford," a fine house in sight of the ocean,

one mile from the village of Freshwater, on the Isle of Wight. They removed thither on November 24, renting the place at first, but later paying for it with the proceeds of *Maud and Other Poems*. To the end of his life "Farringford" was Tennyson's favorite residence, although for the sake of greater privacy, he spent much time in later years at "Aldworth," on the borders of Surrey and Sussex counties.

With the purchase of "Farringford," Tennyson settled down to the steady enjoyment of the poetic fame and social position which his industry and unswerving purpose had won for him. In March, 1854, another son was born to him, Lionel Tennyson (who died in 1886 on the way home from India, and was buried in the Red Sea).^{*} In May, 1855, Oxford University honored the poet with the honorary degree of D.C.L. In this year, *Maud and Other Poems* appeared, to increase further his great fame. He had been quietly working on the Arthurian stories for years, utilizing some of the legends which appealed to him most, in *The Lady of Shalott*, *Sir Galahad*, *Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere*, and *Enid and Nimuë* (1857). Tennyson now issued (1859) four stories, derived from the Welsh *Mabinogion* and from Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, as *Idylls of the King*. These pretended to no allegorical significance and had no trace of his later Round Table plan. Ten thousand copies were sold in six weeks. He revised the stories slightly in 1862, and reprinted them with an added Dedication to the Prince Consort, Albert of Saxe-Gotha, who had died on December 14, 1861. In 1869-70, *The Holy Grail and Other Poems*, consisting of four new idylls based on Malory, sold 40,000 copies in advance of publication. *The Last Tournament* was published separately in the *Contemporary Review*, 1871, and again with *Gareth and Lynette* in 1872. The Library Edition of Tennyson (1871-72) in seven volumes, contained the *Idylls* in rearranged order. A general plan, beginning with the coming of Arthur, centering about the quest for the Holy Grail, and concluding with the passing of Arthur, is here visible. *Balin and Balan*, first published in the *Tiresias* volume of 1885, and added in the final collected edition of his works, 1894, supplied a necessary link in the great allegorical story of the decline and fall of the Round Table.

In the meantime, Tennyson had, in 1864, issued *Enoch Arden*, the most popular of his works. Sixty thousand copies of the poem were sold immediately. In February of the next year, he lost his mother (at the age of 84) who had had the satisfaction of watching her son rise to great fame. A baronetcy was offered Tennyson in 1865, but he refused it, declaring that he cared nothing for the "blare of fame," although he willingly was made a member of the

^{*} The present Lord Tennyson, grandson of the poet, bears the name Lionel.

18 THE FACTS ABOUT TENNYSON

Royal Society. Tennyson was, by this time, taking pains to avoid the throng of visitors which, during the summer season, visited his home on the Isle of Wight. With this end in view, and partly for the sake of Mrs. Tennyson's health, he rented a farm, "Grayshott," at Blackdown, two miles from Haslemere, in Surrey, during the summer of 1868, and laid the foundations for his new home, "Aldworth," which was finally occupied the next year. Here, in his later years, he entertained his friends quietly, and kept away from the beaten track of visitors—although he still lived a part of each year at "Farringford."

V

Between the two homes, Tennyson spent a serene old age, darkened only by the loss of many loved friends and relatives, including his son Lionel, James Spedding, Henry Lushington, Sir John Simeon, and his favorite brother, Charles. From about 1870, he interested himself in drama: and produced successively *Queen Mary* (published 1875), *Harold* (1876), and *Becket* (1884) a trilogy that added to his laurels. These and the other dramas he wrote, although they had some success on the stage, played by actors like Henry Irving and Ellen Terry, are not now numbered among his most important works. From 1875, his son, Hallam Tennyson, lived at home and acted as his secretary. Tennyson was one of the founders of the Metaphysical Society in 1870, and his interest in philosophical speculation is evinced in the *Higher Pantheism*, *De Profundis*, *The Ancient Sage*, and other poems of these later years. Late in 1883, he accepted the Queen's offer, and allowed himself to be elevated to the peerage, as Baron Tennyson of Aldworth and Farringford, although he had refused the honor in 1873, when offered through Gladstone, and in 1874, when offered through Disraeli. *Tiresias and Other Poems* in 1885, and *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*, etc., 1886, represented his maturest poetic vision and comment on life. A final edition (during his lifetime) of his complete works appeared in 1888; to which may be added the contents of *Demeter and Other Poems* in 1889 and *The Death of Oenone, Akbar's Dream, and Other Poems*, which was in press at the time of his death, and was published a few weeks later.

Tennyson's poetic task was now finished. His popularity and influence had steadily mounted during the last fifty years of his life. He celebrated his 83rd birthday on August 6, 1892. Just two months later, on October 6, he died at "Aldworth." The body was interred in Westminster Abbey on October 12, in the Poet's Corner. The bust by Woolner, which may be seen in the Abbey today, represents him as he appeared in 1857. Tennyson liked to believe that the best history of his literary life was

Merlin and the Glcam (1889). The best known of several elegies written at his death is William Watson's *Lacrimae Musarum*.

Few poets have had the satisfaction of observing their own growing fame and influence as did Tennyson. During his lifetime no less than one hundred and fifty important critical articles or books of criticism and interpretation appeared, most of them written to swell the vast chorus of approval. To be sure, there were always a few detractors and skeptics. For example, an anonymous author in the *Temple Bar Magazine* in 1869 declared that Tennyson had "no sound pretension to be called a great poet." But such voices were lost in the general praise. Many, like the Americans, Henry Van Dyke and Thomas Bailey Aldrich, claimed for him the third place in the ranks of English poets. There is little wonder that a reaction followed, and that for two or more decades following his death, many went to the opposite extreme by denying him greatness. The truth lies, of course, somewhere between the extremes. Realizing the futility of discussing the relative rank of poets, it is sufficient today to agree that Tennyson was the voice of his times. He was the official spokesman of those who led the English people through a period of transition—a changing age, in social standards, in political ideals, in the grounds of religious faith. Tennyson dealt with the greatest poetic themes. He handled them with a metrical skill that was the result of conscious effort. His easy mastery over simple images of natural phenomena gave the poetry of his time a common background of bright color and rich beauty. He led his contemporaries in the writing of love poetry more concerned with subtle and individual moods, romantic tenderness, and social conscience, than the love poetry of any preceding age. He showed the world that elegiac verse may be the medium of real, inconsolable grief and sense of loss. He expressed better than any other poet the poignant religious dilemma of his time; he put into language the "Victorian compromise" of his contemporaries, their serious effort to cling to what they regarded "the indestructible and inalienable minimum of faith which humanity cannot give up because it is necessary to life." Finally, he was not a superficial thinker, but a profound and serious one; and he drew

... toward the long frost and the longest night,
Wearing his wisdom lightly, like the fruit
Which in our winter woodland looks a flower.

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

TO THE QUEEN

Revered, beloved—O you that hold
A nobler office upon earth
Than arms, or power of brain, or birth
Could give the warrior kings of old,

Victoria,—since your Royal grace
To one of less desert allows
This laurel greener from the brows
Of him that utter'd nothing base;

And should your greatness, and the care
That yokes with empire, yield you time 10
To make demand of modern rhyme
If aught of ancient worth be there;

Then—while a sweeter music wakes,
And through wild March the throstle calls,
Where all about your palace-walls
The sunlit almond-blossom shakes—

Take, Madam, this poor book of song;
For though the faults were thick as dust
In vacant chambers, I could trust
Your kindness. May you rule us long, 20

And leave us rulers of your blood
As noble till the latest day!
May children of our children say,
“She wrought her people lasting good;

“Her court was pure; her life serene;
God gave her peace; her land reposed;
A thousand claims to reverence closed
In her as Mother, Wife, and Queen,

"And statesmen at her council met,
 Who knew the seasons, when to take
 Occasion by the hand, and make
 The bounds of freedom wider yet

"By shaping some august decree,
 Which kept her throne unshaken still,
 Broad-based upon her people's will,
 And compass'd by the inviolate sea."

CLARIBEL

A MELODY

I

Where Claribel low-lieth
 The breezes pause and die,
 Letting the rose-leaves fall:
 But the solemn oak-tree sigheth,
 Thick-leaved, ambrosial,
 With an ancient melody
 Of an inward agony,
 Where Claribel low-lieth.

10

II

At eve the beetle boometh!
 Athwart the thicket lone:
 At noon the wild bee hummeth
 About the moss'd headstone:
 At midnight the moon cometh,
 And looketh down alone.
 Her song the lintwhite swelleth,
 The clear-voiced mavis dwelleth,
 The callow throstle lispeth,
 The slumbrous wave outwelleth,
 The babbling runnel crispeth.
 The hollow grot replieth
 Where Claribel low-lieth.

20

the poem stinks

T's mother

I

Eyes not down-dropt nor over-bright, but fed
 With the clear-pointed flame of chastity,
 Clear, without heat, undying, tended by
 Pure vestal thoughts in the translucent fane
 Of her still spirit; locks not wide-dispread,
 Madonna-wise on either side her head;
 Sweet lips whereon perpetually did reign
 The summer calm of golden charity,
 Were fixed shadows of thy fixed mood,
 Revered Isabel, the crown and head,
 The stately flower of female fortitude,
 Of perfect wifehood and pure lowlihead.

10

II

The intuitive decision of a bright
 And thorough-edged intellect to part
 Error from crime; a prudence to withhold;
 The laws of marriage character'd in gold
 Upon the blanched tablets of her heart;
 A love still burning upward, giving light
 To read those laws; an accent very low
 In blandishment, but a most silver flow
 Of subtle-paced counsel in distress,
 Right to the heart and brain, though undescried,
 Winning its way with extreme gentleness
 Through all the outworks of suspicious pride;
 A courage to endure and to obey;
 A hate of gossip parlance, and of sway,
 Crown'd Isabel, through all her placid life,
 The queen of marriage, a most perfect wife.

20

III

The mellow'd reflex of a winter moon;
 A clear stream flowing with a muddy one,
 Till in its onward current it absorbs

30

*Mother**Who? Father? III = confu imo*

judith on her?

With swifter movement and in purer light
 The vexed eddies of its wayward brother:
 A leaning and upbearing parasite,
 Clothing the stem, which else had fallen quite,
 With cluster'd flower-bells and ambrosial orbs
 Of rich fruit-bunches leaning on each other—
 Shadow forth thee:—the world hath not another
 (Though all her fairest forms are types of thee,
 And thou of God in thy great charity)
 Of such a finish'd chasten'd purity.

10

MARIANA

"Mariana in the moated grange."
Measure for Measure.

With blackest moss the flower-plots
 Were thickly crusted, one and all:
 The rusted nails fell from the knots
 That held the peach to the garden-wall.
 The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:
 Unlifted was the clinking latch;
 Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
 Upon the lonely moated grange.
 She only said, "My life is dreary,
 He cometh not," she said;
 She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
 I would that I were dead!"

20

Her tears fell with the dews at even;
 Her tears fell ere the dews were dried;
 She could not look on the sweet heaven,
 Either at morn or eventide.
 After the flitting of the bats,
 When thickest dark did trance the sky,
 She drew her casement-curtain by,
 And glanced athwart the glooming flats.
 She only said, "The night is dreary,
 He cometh not," she said;
 She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
 I would that I were dead!"

30

Upon the middle of the night,
Waking she heard the night-fowl crow:
The cock sung out an hour ere light:
From the dark fen the oxen's low
Came to her: without hope of change,
In sleep she seem'd to walk forlorn,
Till cold winds woke the gray-eyed morn
About the lonely moated grange.
She only said, "The day is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am weary, weary,
I would that I were dead!"

10

About a stone-cast from the wall
A sluice with blacken'd waters slept,
And o'er it many, round and small,
The cluster'd marish-mosses crept.
Hard by a poplar shook alway,
All silver-green with gnarled bark:
For leagues no other tree did mark
The level waste, the rounding gray.
She only said, "My life is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am weary, weary,
I would that I were dead!"

20

And ever when the moon was low,
And the shrill winds were up and away,
In the white curtain, to and fro,
She saw the gusty shadow sway.
But when the moon was very low,
And wild winds bound within their cell,
The shadow of the poplar fell
Upon her bed, across her brow.
She only said, "The night is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am weary, weary,
I would that I were dead!"

30

All day within the dreamy house,
The doors upon their hinges creak'd;

The blue fly sung in the pane; the mouse
 Behind the mouldering wainscot shriek'd,
 Or from the crevice peer'd about.
 Old faces glimmer'd through the doors,
 Old footsteps trod the upper floors,
 Old voices called her from without.
 She only said, "My life is dreary,
 He cometh not," she said;
 She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
 I would that I were dead!"

10

The sparrow's chirrup on the roof,
 The slow clock ticking, and the sound
 Which to the wooing wind aloof
 The poplar made, did all confound
 Her sense; but most she loath'd the hour
 When the thick-moted sunbeam lay
 Athwart the chambers, and the day
 Was sloping toward his western bower.
 Then, said she, "I am very dreary,
 He will not come," she said;
 She wept, "I am aweary, aweary,
 Oh, God, that I were dead!"

20

THE KRAKEN

Below the thunders of the upper deep;
 Far, far beneath in the abysmal sea,
 His ancient, dreamless, uninvaded sleep
 The Kraken sleepeth: faintest sunlights flee
 About his shadowy sides: above him swell
 Huge sponges of millennial growth and height;
 And far away into the sickly light,
 From many a wondrous grot and secret cell
 Unnumber'd and enormous polypi
 Winnow with giant arms the slumbering green.
 There hath he lain for ages and will lie
 Battening upon huge seaworms in his sleep,
 Until the latter fire shall heat the deep;
 Then once by man and angels to be seen,
 In roaring he shall rise and on the surface die.

30

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE ARABIAN
NIGHTS

When the breeze of a joyful dawn blew free,
In the silken sail of infancy,
The tide of time flow'd back with me,
 The forward-flowing tide of time;
And many a sheeny summer-morn,
Adown the Tigris I was borne,
By Bagdat's shrines of fretted gold,
High-walled gardens green and old;
True Mussulman was I and sworn,
 For it was in the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

10

Anight my shallop, rustling through
The low and bloomed foliage, drove
The fragrant, glistening deeps, and clove
The citron-shadows in the blue:
By garden porches on the brim,
The costly doors flung open wide,
Gold glittering through lamplight dim,
And broider'd sofas on each side:
 In sooth it was a goodly time,
 For it was in the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

20

Often, where clear-stemm'd platans guard
The outlet, did I turn away
The boat-head down a broad canal
From the main river sluiced, where all
The sloping of the moonlit sward
Was damask-work, and deep inlay
Of braided blooms unmown, which crept
Adown to where the water slept.
 A goodly place, a goodly time,
 For it was in the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

30

A motion from the river won
Ridg'd the smooth level, bearing on

My shallop through the star-strown calm.
 Until another night in night
 I enter'd, from the clearer light,
 Imbower'd vaults of pillar'd palm,
 Imprisoning sweets, which, as they clomb
 Heavenward, were stay'd beneath the dome
 Of hollow boughs.—A goodly time,
 For it was in the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Still onward; and the clear canal
 Is rounded to as clear a lake.
 From the green rivage many a fall
 Of diamond rillels musical,
 Through little crystal arches low
 Down from the central fountain's flow
 Fall'n silver-chiming, seem'd to shake
 The sparkling flints beneath the prow.
 A goodly place, a goodly time,
 For it was in the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

10

20

Above through many a bowery turn
 A walk with vary-colour'd shells
 Wander'd engrain'd. On either side
 All round about the fragrant marge
 From fluted vase, and brazen urn
 In order, eastern flowers large,
 Some dropping low their crimson bells
 Half-clos'd, and others studded wide
 With disks and tiars, fed the time
 With odour in the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

30

Far off, and where the lemon-grove
 In closest coverture upsprung,
 The living airs of middle night
 Died round the bulbul as he sung;
 Not he: but something which possess'd
 The darkness of the world, delight,
 Life, anguish, death, immortal love,
 Ceasing not, mingled, unrepress'd,

Apart from place, withholding time,
But flattering the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Black the garden-bowers and grots
Slumber'd: the solemn palms were ranged
Above, unwoo'd of summer wind:
A sudden splendour from behind
Flush'd all the leaves with rich gold-green
And, flowing rapidly between
Their interspaces, counterchanged 10
The level lake with diamond-plots
Of dark and bright. A lovely time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Dark-blue the deep sphere overhead,
Distinct with vivid stars inlaid,
Grew darker from that under-flame:
So, leaping lightly from the boat,
With silver anchor left afloat,
In marvel whence that glory came 20
Upon me, as in sleep I sank
In cool soft turf upon the bank,
Entranced with that place and time,
So worthy of the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Thence through the garden I was drawn—
A realm of pleasance, many a mound,
And many a shadow-chequer'd lawn
Full of the city's stilly sound,
And deep myrrh-thickets blowing round 30
The stately cedar, tamarisks,
Thick rosaries of scented thorn,
Tall orient shrubs, and obelisks
Graven with emblems of the time,
In honour of the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

With dazed vision unawares
From the long alley's lattic'd shade

Emerged, I came upon the great
 Pavilion of the Caliphat.
 Right to the carven cedarn doors,
 Flung inward over spangled floors,
 Broad-based flights of marble stairs
 Ran up with golden balustrade,
 After the fashion of the time,
 And humour of the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

The fourscore windows all alight
 As with the quintessence of flame,
 A million tapers flaring bright
 From twisted silvers look'd to shame
 The hollow-vaulted dark, and stream'd
 Upon the mooned domes aloof
 In inmost Bagdat, till there seem'd
 Hundreds of crescents on the roof
 Of night new-risen, that marvellous time,
 To celebrate the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

10

20

Then stole I up, and trancedly
 Gaz'd on the Persian girl alone,
 Serene with argent-lidded eyes
 Amorous, and lashes like to rays
 Of darkness, and a brow of pearl
 Tressed with redolent ebony,
 In many a dark delicious curl,
 Flowing beneath her rose-hued zone;
 The sweetest lady of the time,
 Well worthy of the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

30

Six columns, three on either side,
 Pure silver, underpropt a rich
 Throne of the massive ore, from which
 Down-droop'd, in many a floating fold,
 Engarlanded and diaper'd
 With inwrought flowers, a cloth of gold.
 Thereon, his deep eye laughter-stirr'd
 With merriment of kingly pride,

ODE TO MEMORY

31

Soie star of all that place and time,
I saw him—in his golden prime,
THE GOOD HAROUN ALRASCHID!

ODE TO MEMORY

I

Thou who stealest fire,
From the fountains of the past,
To glorify the present; oh, haste,
Visit my low desire!
Strengthen me, enlighten me!
I faint in this obscurity,
Thou dewy dawn of memory.

10

II

Come not as thou camest of late,
Flinging the gloom of yesternight
On the white day; but robed in soften'd light
Of orient state.
Whilome thou camest with the morning mist,
Even as a maid, whose stately brow
The dew-impearled winds of dawn have kiss'd
When she, as thou,
Stays on her floating locks the lovely freight
Of overflowing blooms, and earliest shoots
Of orient green, giving safe pledge of fruits,
Which in wintertide shall star
The black earth with brilliance rare.

20

III

Whilome thou camest with the morning mist,
And with the evening cloud,
Showering thy gleaned wealth into my open breast,
(Those peerless flowers which in the rudest wind
Never grow sere,
When rooted in the garden of the mind,
Because they are the earliest of the year).
Nor was the night thy shroud.

30

In sweet dreams softer than unbroken rest
 Thou leddest by the hand thine infant Hope.
 The eddyng of her garments caught from thee
 The light of thy great presence; and the cope
 Of the half-attain'd futurity,
 Though deep not fathomless,
 Was cloven with the million stars which tremble
 O'er the deep mind of dauntless infancy.
 Small thought was there of life's distress;
 For sure she deem'd no mist of earth could dull 10
 Those spirit-thrilling eyes so keen and beautiful:
 Sure she was nigher to heaven's spheres,
 Listening the lordly music flowing from
 The illimitable years.
 O strengthen me, enlighten me!
 I faint in this obscurity,
 Thou dewy dawn of memory.

IV

Come forth, I charge thee, arise,
 Thou of the many tongues, the myriad eyes!
 Thou comest not with shows of flaunting vines 20
 Unto mine inner eye,
 Divinest Memory!
 Thou wert not nursed by the waterfall
 Which ever sounds and shines
 A pillar of white light upon the wall
 Of purple cliffs, aloof descried:
 Come from the woods that belt the gray hill-side,
 The seven elms, the poplars four
 That stand beside my father's door,
 And chiefly from the brook that loves 30
 To purl o'er matted cress and ribbed sand,
 Or dimple in the dark of rushy coves,
 Drawing into his narrow earthen urn,
 In every elbow and turn,
 The filter'd tribute of the rough woodland.
 O! hither lead thy feet!
 Pour round mine ears the livelong bleat
 Of the thick-fleeced sheep from wattled folds,
 Upon the ridged wolds,

When the first matin-song hath waken'd loud
Over the dark dewy earth forlorn,
What time the amber morn
Forth gushes from beneath a low-hung cloud.

V

Large dowries doth the raptured eye
To the young spirit present
When first she is wed;
And like a bride of old
In triumph led,
With music and sweet showers 10
Of festal flowers,
Unto the dwelling she must sway.
Well hast thou done, great artist Memory,
In setting round thy first experiment
With royal framework of wrought gold;
Needs must thou dearly love thy first essay,
And, foremost in thy various gallery
Place it, where sweetest sunlight falls
Upon the storied walls;
For the discovery 20
And newness of thine art so pleased thee,
That all which thou hast drawn of fairest
Or boldest since, but lightly weighs
With thee unto the love thou bearest
The first-born of thy genius. Artist-like,
Ever retiring thou dost gaze
On the prime labour of thine early days:
No matter what the sketch might be
Whether the high field on the bushless pike,
Or even a sand-built ridge 30
Of heaped hills that mound the sea,
Overblown with murmurs harsh,
Or even a lowly cottage whence we see
Stretch'd wide and wild the waste enormous marsh,
Where from the frequent bridge,
Like emblems of infinity,
The trenched waters run from sky to sky;
Or a garden bower'd close
With plaited alleys of the trailing rose,

Long alleys falling down to twilight grots,
 Or opening upon level plots
 Of crowned lilies, standing near
 Purple-spiked lavender:
 Whither in after life retired
 From brawling storms,
 From weary wind,
 With youthful fancy re-inspired,
 We may hold converse with all forms
 Of the many-sided mind,
 And those whom passion hath not blinded,
 Subtle-thoughted, myriad-minded.
 My friend, with you to live alone,
 Were how much better than to own
 A crown, a sceptre, and a throne!
 O strengthen me, enlighten me!
 I faint in this obscurity,
 Thou dewy dawn of memory.

10

THE POET

The poet in a golden clime was born,
 With golden stars above;
 Dower'd with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
 The love of love.

20

He saw through life and death, through good and ill,
 He saw through his own soul.
 The marvel of the everlasting will,
 An open scroll,

Before him lay: with echoing feet he threaded
 The secretest walks of fame:
 The viewless arrows of his thoughts were headed
 And wing'd with flame,

30

Like Indian reeds blown from his silver tongue,
 And of so fierce a flight,
 From Calpe unto Caucasus they sung,
 Filling with light

And vagrant melodies the winds which bore
 Them earthward till they lit;
Then, like the arrow-seeds of the field flower,
 The fruitful wit

Cleaving, took root, and springing forth anew
 Where'er they fell, behold,
Like to the mother plant in semblance, grew
 A flower all gold,

And bravely furnish'd all abroad to fling
 The winged shafts of truth, 10
To throng with stately blooms the breathing spring
 Of Hope and Youth.

So many minds did gird their orbs with beams,
 Though one did fling the fire.
Heaven flow'd upon the soul in many dreams
 Of high desire.

Thus truth was multiplied on truth, the world
 Like one great garden show'd,
And through the wreaths of floating dark upcurl'd,
 Rare sunrise flow'd. 20

And Freedom rear'd in that august sunrise
 Her beautiful bold brow,
When rites and forms before his burning eyes
 Melted like snow.

There was no blood upon her maiden robes
 Sunn'd by those orient skies;
But round about the circles of the globes
 Of her keen eyes

And in her raiment's hem was trac'd in flame
 WISDOM, a name to shake 30
All evil dreams of power—a sacred name.
 And when she spake,

Her words did gather thunder as they ran,
 And as the lightning to the thunder

Which follows it, riving the spirit of man,
 Making earth wonder,

So was their meaning to her words. No sword
 Of wrath her right arm whirl'd,
 But one poor poet's scroll, and with *his* word
 She shook the world.

THE POET'S MIND

I

Vex not thou the poet's mind
 With thy shallow wit:
 Vex not thou the poet's mind;
 For thou canst not fathom it,
 Clear and bright it should be ever,
 Flowing like a crystal river;
 Bright as light, and clear as wind.

10

II

Dark-brow'd sophist, come not anear;
 All the place is holy ground;
 Hollow smile and frozen sneer
 Come not here.
 Holy water will I pour
 Into every spicy flower.
 Of the laurel-shrubs that hedge it around.
 The flowers would faint at your cruel cheer.
 In your eye there is death,
 There is frost in your breath
 Which would blight the plants.
 Where you stand you cannot hear
 From the groves within
 The wild-bird's din.
 In the heart of the garden the merry bird chants;
 It would fall to the ground if you came in.
 In the middle leaps a fountain
 Like sheet lightning,
 Ever brightening
 With a low melodious thunder;

20

30

All day and all night it is ever drawn
 From the brain of the purple mountain
 Which stands in the distance yonder :
 It springs on a level of bowery lawn,
 And the mountain draws it from Heaven above,
 And it sings a song of undying love ;
 And yet, though its voice be so clear and full,
 You never would hear it ; your ears are so dull ;
 So keep where you are ; you are foul with sin
 It would shrink to the earth if you came in.

10

THE SEA-FAIRIES

Slow sail'd the weary mariners and saw,
 Betwixt the green brink and the running foam,
 Sweet faces, rounded arms, and bosoms prest
 To little harps of gold ; and while they mused,
 Whispering to each other half in fear,
 Shrill music reach'd them on the middle sea.

Whither away, whither away, whither away ? fly no
 more.

Whither away from the high green field, and the
 happy blossoming shore ?

Day and night to the billow the fountain calls ;
 Down shower the gambolling waterfalls
 From wandering over the lea :

20

Out of the live-green heart of the dells
 They freshen the silvery-crimson shells,
 And thick with white bells the clover-hill swells
 High over the full-toned sea :

O hither, come hither and furl your sails,
 Come hither to me and to me :

Hither, come hither and frolic and play ;
 Here it is only the mew that wails ;

We will sing to you all the day :

30

Mariner, mariner, furl your sails,
 For here are the blissful downs and dales,
 And merrily, merrily carol the gales,
 And the spangle dances in bight and bay,
 And the rainbow forms and flies on the land
 Over the islands free ;

And the rainbow lives in the curve of the sand ;
 Hither, come hither and see ;
 And the rainbow hangs on the poising wave,
 And sweet is the colour of cove and cave,
 And sweet shall your welcome be :
 O hither, come hither, and be our lords,
 For merry brides are we :
 We will kiss sweet kisses, and speak sweet words :
 O listen, listen, your eyes shall glisten
 With pleasure and love and jubilee : 10
 O listen, listen, your eyes shall glisten
 When the sharp clear twang of the golden chords
 Runs up the ridged sea.
 Who can light on as happy a shore
 All the world o'er, all the world o'er ?
 Whither away ? listen and stay : mariner, mariner, fly
 no more.

THE BALLAD OF ORIANA

My heart is wasted with my woe,
 Oriana.
 There is no rest for me below,
 Oriana. 20
 When the long dun wolds are ribb'd with snow
 And loud the Norland whirlwinds blow,
 Oriana,
 Alone I wander to and fro,
 Oriana.

 Ere the light on dark was growing,
 Oriana,
 At midnight the cock was crowing,
 Oriana :
 Winds were blowing, waters flowing,
 We heard the steeds to battle going, 30
 Oriana :
 Aloud the hollow bugle blowing,
 Oriana.

 In the yew-wood black as night,
 Oriana,

Ere I rode into the fight,
 Oriana,
 While blissful tears blinded my sight
 By star-shine and by moonlight,
 Oriana,
 I to thee my troth did plight,
 Oriana.

She stood upon the castle wall,
Oriana:
She watch'd my crest among them all, 10
Oriana:
She saw me fight, she heard me call,
When forth there stept a foeman tall,
Oriana,
Atween me and the castle wall,
Oriana.

The bitter arrow went aside,
 Oriana :
 The false, false arrow went aside,
 Oriana :
 The damned arrow glanc'd aside,
 And pierc'd thy heart, my love, my bride,
 Oriana !
 Thy heart, my life, my love, my bride,
 Oriana !

Oh! narrow, narrow was the space,
 Oriana.
 Loud, loud rung out the bugle's brays,
 Oriana.
 Oh! deathful stabs were dealt apace,
 The battle deepen'd in its place,
 Oriana;
 But I was down upon my face,
 Oriana.

They should have stabb'd me where I lay,
 Oriana!
 How could I rise and come away,
 Oriana?

I dare not die and come to thee,
 Oriana.
 I hear the roaring of the sea,
 Oriana.

CIRCUMSTANCE

Two children in two neighbour villages
 Playing mad pranks along the healthy leas;
 Two strangers meeting at a festival;
 Two lovers whispering by an orchard wall;
 Two lives bound fast in one with golden ease;
 Two graves grass-green beside a gray church-tower, 10
 Wash'd with still rains and daisy-blossomed;
 Two children in one hamlet born and bred;
 So runs the round of life from hour to hour.

BUONAPARTE

He thought to quell the stubborn hearts of oak,
 Madman!—to chain with chains, and bind with bands
 That island queen who sways the floods and lands
 From Ind to Ind, but in fair daylight woke,
 When from her wooden walls,—lit by sure hands,—
 With thunders, and with lightnings, and with
 smoke,—

Peal after peal, the British battle broke,
 Lulling the brine against the Coptic sands.
 We taught him lowlier moods, when Elsinore
 Heard the war moan along the distant sea,
 Rocking with shatter'd spars, with sudden fires
 Flamed over: at Trafalgar yet once more
 We taught him: late he learned humility
 Perforce, like those whom Gideon school'd with
 briers.

20

Denmark

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

PART I

On either side the river lie
 Long fields of barley and of rye,

That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
 And through the field the road runs by
 To many-tower'd Camelot;
 And up and down the people go,
 Gazing where the lilies blow
 Round an island there below,
 The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
 Little breezes dusk and shiver
 Through the wave that runs for ever 10
 By the island in the river
 Flowing down to Camelot.
 Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
 Overlook a space of flowers,
 And the silent isle embowers
 The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veil'd,
 Slide the heavy barges trail'd
 By slow horses; and unhail'd
 The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd 20
 Skimming down to Camelot:
 But who hath seen her wave her hand?
 Or at the casement seen her stand?
 Or is she known in all the land,
 The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early
 In among the bearded barley,
 Hear a song that echoes cheerly
 From the river winding clearly,
 Down to tower'd Camelot: 30
 And by the moon the reaper weary,
 Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
 Listening, whispers "'Tis the fairy
 Lady of Shalott."

PART II

There she weaves by night and day
 A magic web with colours gay.

And moving through a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear. 10
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot:
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,
Goes by to tower'd Camelot;
And sometimes through the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often through the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights,
And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed;—
"I am half sick of shadows," said
The Lady of Shalott.

PART III

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves ;

The sun came dazzling through the leaves,
 And flamed upon the brazen greaves
 Of bold Sir Lancelot.
 A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
 To a lady in his shield,
 That sparkled on the yellow field
 Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
 Like to some branch of stars we see
 Hung in the golden Galaxy. 10
 The bridle bells rang merrily
 As he rode down to Camelot:
 And from his blazon'd baldric slung
 A mighty silver bugle hung,
 And as he rode his armour rung
 Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
 Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,
 The helmet and the helmet-feather
 Burn'd like one burning flame together, 20
 As he rode down to Camelot:
 As often through the purple night,
 Below the starry clusters bright,
 Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
 Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd;
 On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;
 From underneath his helmet flow'd
 His coal-black curls as on he rode,
 As he rode down to Camelot. 30
 From the bank and from the river
 He flash'd into the crystal mirror,
 "Tirra lirra," by the river
 Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
 She made three paces through the room,
 She saw the water-lily bloom,

She saw the helmet and the plume,
 She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side:
"The curse is come upon me," cried
 The Lady of Shalott.

PART IV

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining 10
 Over tower'd Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
 The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse—
Like some bold seër in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—
With a glassy countenance
 Did she look to Camelot. 20
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Through the noises of the night
 She floated down to Camelot:
And as the boat-head wound along 30
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
 The Lady of Shalott—

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,

And her eyes were darken'd wholly,
 Turn'd to tower'd Camelot;
 For ere she reach'd upon the tide
 The first house by the water-side,
 Singing in her song she died,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
 By garden-wall and gallery,
 A gleaming shape she floated by,
 Dead-pale between the houses high,
 Silent into Camelot.
 Out upon the wharfs they came,
 Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
 And round the prow they read her name,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this, and what is here?
 And in the lighted palace near
 Died the sound of royal cheer;
 And they cross'd themselves for fear,
 All the knights at Camelot:
 But Lancelot mused a little space;
 He said, "She has a lovely face;
 God in his mercy lend her grace,
 The Lady of Shalott."

MARIANA IN THE SOUTH

With one black shadow at its feet,
 The house through all the level shines,
 Close-latticed to the brooding heat,
 And silent in its dusty vines:
 A faint-blue ridge upon the right,
 An empty river-bed before,
 And shallows on a distant shore,
 In glaring sand and inlets bright.
 But "Ave Mary," made she moan,
 And "Ave Mary," night and morn,
 And "Ah," she sang, "to be all alone,
 To live forgotten, and love forlorn."

She, as her carol sadder grew,
 From brow and bosom slowly down
 Through rosy taper fingers drew
 Her streaming curls of deepest brown
 To left and right, and made appear,
 Still-lighted in a secret shrine,
 Her melancholy eyes divine,
 The home of woe without a tear.
 And "Ave Mary," was her moan,
 "Madonna, sad is night and morn;"
 And "Ah," she sang, "to be all alone,
 To live forgotten, and love forlorn."

10

Till all the crimson changed, and past
 Into deep orange o'er the sea,
 Low on her knees herself she cast,
 Before Our Lady murmur'd she;
 Complaining, "Mother, give me grace
 To help me of my weary load."
 And on the liquid mirror glow'd
 The clear perfection of her face.

20

"Is this the form," she made her moan,
 "That won his praises night and morn?"
 And "Ah," she said, "but I wake alone,
 I sleep forgotten, I wake forlorn."

Nor bird would sing, nor lamb would bleat,
 Nor any cloud would cross the vault,
 But day increased from heat to heat,
 On stony drought and steaming salt;
 Till now at noon she slept again,
 And seem'd knee-deep in mountain grass,
 And heard her native breezes pass,
 And runlets babbling down the glen.

30

She breathed in sleep a lower moan,
 And murmuring, as at night and morn,
 She thought, "My spirit is here alone,
 Walks forgotten, and is forlorn."

Dreaming, she knew it was a dream:
 She felt he was and was not there.

She woke: the babble of the stream
Fell, and, without, the steady glare
Shrank one sick willow sere and small.
The river-bed was dusty-white;
And all the furnace of the light
Struck up against the blinding wall.
She whisper'd, with a stifled moan
More inward than at night or morn,
"Sweet Mother, let me not here alone
Live forgotten and die forlorn."

10

And, rising, from her bosom drew
Old letters, breathing of her worth,
For "Love," they said, "must needs be true,
To what is loveliest upon earth."
An image seem'd to pass the door,
To look at her with slight, and say,
"But now thy beauty flows away,
So be alone for evermore."
"O cruel heart," she changed her tone,
"And cruel love, whose end is scorn,
Is this the end to be left alone,
To live forgotten, and die forlorn!"

20

But sometimes in the falling day
An image seem'd to pass the door,
To look into her eyes and say,
"But thou shalt be alone no more."
And flaming downward over all
From heat to heat the day decreased,
And slowly rounded to the east
The one black shadow from the wall.
"The day to night," she made her moan,
"The day to night, the night to morn,
And day and night I am left alone
To live forgotten, and love forlorn."

30

At eve a dry cicala sung,
There came a sound as of the sea;
Backward the lattice-blind she flung,
And lean'd upon the balcony.

There all in spaces rosy-bright

Large Hesper glitter'd on her tears,
And deepening through the silent spheres,
Heaven over Heaven rose the night.

And weeping then she made her moan,
"The night comes on that knows not morn,
When I shall cease to be all alone,
To live forgotten, and love forlorn."

THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER

I see the wealthy miller yet,
His double chin, his portly size,
And who that knew him could forget
The busy wrinkles round his eyes?
The slow wise smile that, round about
His dusty forehead dryly curl'd,
Seem'd half-within and half-without,
And full of dealings with the world?

10

In yonder chair I see him sit,
Three fingers round the old silver cup—
I see his gray eyes twinkle yet
At his own jest—gray eyes lit up
With summer lightnings of a soul
So full of summer warmth, so glad,
So healthy, sound, and clear and whole,
His memory scarce can make me sad.

20

Yet fill my glass: give me one kiss:
My own sweet Alice, we must die.
There's somewhat in this world amiss
Shall be unriddled by-and-by.
There's somewhat flows to us in life,
But more is taken quite away.
Pray, Alice, pray, my darling wife,
That we may die the self-same day.

30

Have I not found a happy earth?
I least should breathe a thought of pain.
Would God renew me from my birth
I'd almost live my life again.

So sweet it seems with thee to walk,
And once again to woo thee mine—
It seems in after-dinner talk
Across the walnuts and the wine—

To be the long and listless boy
Late-left an orphan of the squire,
Where this old mansion mounted high
Looks down upon the village spire:
For even here, where I and you
Have lived and loved alone so long,
Each morn my sleep was broken through
By some wild skylark's matin song.

10

And oft I heard the tender dove
In firry woodlands making moan;
But ere I saw your eyes, my love,
I had no motion of my own.
For scarce my life with fancy play'd
Before I dream'd that pleasant dream—
Still hither thither idly sway'd,
Like those long mosses in the stream.

20

Or from the bridge I lean'd to hear
The mill-dam rushing down with noise,
And see the minnows everywhere
In crystal eddies glance and poise,
The tall flag-flowers when they sprung
Below the range of stepping-stones,
Or those three chestnuts near, that hung
In masses thick with milky cones.

But, Alice, what an hour was that,
When after roving in the woods
('Twas April then), I came and sat
Below the chestnuts, when their buds
Were glistening to the breezy blue;
And on the slope, an absent fool,
I cast me down, nor thought of you,
But angled in the higher pool.

30

A love-song I had somewhere read,
An echo from a measured strain,
Beat time to nothing in my head
From some odd corner of the brain.
It haunted me, the morning long,
With weary sameness in the rhymes,
The phantom of a silent song,
That went and came a thousand times.

Then leapt a trout. In lazy mood
I watch'd the little circles die;
They pass'd into the level flood,
And there a vision caught my eye;
The reflex of a beauteous form,
A glowing arm, a gleaming neck,
As when a sunbeam wavers warm
Within the dark and dimpled beck. 10

For you remember, you had set,
That morning, on the casement's edge
A long green box of mignonette,
And you were leaning from the ledge: 20
And when I raised my eyes, above
They met with two so full and bright—
Such eyes I swear to you, my love,
That these have never lost their light.

I loved, and love dispell'd the fear
That I should die an early death:
For love possess'd the atmosphere,
And fill'd the breast with purer breath.
My mother thought, What ails the boy?
For I was alter'd, and began 30
To move about the house with joy,
And with the certain step of man.

I love the brimming wave that swam
Through quiet meadows round the mill,
The sleepy pool above the dam,
The pool beneath it never still,
The meal-sacks on the whiten'd floor,
The dark round of the dripping wheel,

The very air about the door
Made misty with the floating meal.

And oft in ramblings on the wold,
When April nights began to blow,
And April's crescent glimmer'd cold,
I saw the village lights below;
I knew your taper far away,
And full at heart of trembling hope,
From off the wold I came, and lay
Upon the freshly-flower'd slope.

10

The deep brook groan'd beneath the mill;
And "By that lamp," I thought, "she sits!"
The white chalk-quarry from the hill
Gleam'd to the flying moon by fits.
"Oh that I were beside her now!
Oh will she answer if I call?
Oh would she give me vow for vow
Sweet Alice, if I told her all?"

Sometimes I saw you sit and spin;
And, in the pauses of the wind,
Sometimes I heard you sing within;
Sometimes your shadow cross'd the blind.
At last you rose and moved the light,
And the long shadow of the chair
Flitted across into the night,
And all the casement darken'd there.

20

But when at last I dared to speak,
The lanes, you know, were white with may,
Your ripe lips moved not, but your cheek
Flush'd like the coming of the day;
And so it was, half-sly, half-shy,
You would, and would not, little one!
Although I pleaded tenderly,
And you and I were all alone.

30

And slowly was my mother brought
To yield consent to my desire;

She wish'd me happy, but she thought
I might have look'd a little higher;
And I was young—too young to wed:
“Yet must I love her for your sake;
Go fetch your Alice here,” she said:
Her eyelid quiver'd as she spake.

And down I went to fetch my bride:
But, Alice, you were ill at ease;
This dress and that by turns you tried,
Too fearful that you should not please.
I loved you better for your fears,
I knew you could not look but well;
And dews, that would have fall'n in tears
I kiss'd away before they fell.

I watch'd the little flutterings,
The doubt my mother would not see;
She spoke at large of many things,
And at the last she spoke of me;
And turning look'd upon your face,
As near this door you sat apart,
And rose, and, with a silent grace
Approaching, press'd you heart to heart.

Ah, well—but sing the foolish song
I gave you, Alice, on the day
When, arm in arm, we went along,
A pensive pair, and you were gay
With bridal flowers—that I may seem,
As in the nights of old, to lie
Beside the mill-wheel in the stream,
While those full chestnuts whisper by.

It is the miller's daughter,
And she is grown so dear, so dear,
That I would be the jewel
That trembles at her ear;
For hid in ringlets day and night,
I'd touch her neck so warm and white.

And I would be the girdle
About her dainty dainty waist,
And her heart would beat against me,

In sorrow and in rest:
And I should know if it beat right,
I'd clasp it round so close and tight.

And I would be the necklace,
And all day long to fall and rise
Upon her balmy bosom,
With her laughter or her sighs,
And I would lie so light, so light,
I scarce should be unclasp'd at night.

A trifle, sweet! which true love spells—
True love interprets—right alone.
His light upon the letter dwells,
For all the spirit is his own.
So, if I waste words now, in truth
You must blame Love. His early rage
Had force to make me rhyme in youth,
And makes me talk too much in age.

10

And now those vivid hours are gone,
Like mine own life to me thou art,
Where Past and Present, wound in one,
Do make a garland for the heart:
So sing that other song I made,
Half-anger'd with my happy lot,
The day when in the chestnut shade
I found the blue Forget-me-not.

20

Love that hath us in the net,
Can he pass, and we forget?
Many suns arise and set.
Many a chance the years beget.
Love the gift is Love the debt.

30

Even so.
Love is hurt with jar and fret.
Love is made a vague regret.
Eyes with idle tears are wet.
Idle habit links us yet.
What is love? for we forget:
Ah, no! no!

Look through mine eyes with thine. True wife,
Round my true heart thine arms entwine;
My other dearer life in life,
Look through my very soul with thine
Untouch'd with any shade of years,
May those kind eyes for ever dwell!

40

They have not shed a many tears,
Dear eyes, since first I knew them well.

Yet tears they shed: they had their part
Of sorrow: for when time was ripe,
The still affection of the heart
Became an outward breathing type,
That into stillness pass'd again,
And left a want unknown before;
Although the loss that brought us pain,
That loss but made us love the more, 10

With farther lookings on. The kiss,
The woven arms, seem but to be
Weak symbols of the settled bliss,
The comfort, I have found in thee.
But that God bless thee, dear—who wrought
Two spirits to one equal mind—
With blessings beyond hope or thought,
With blessings which no words can find.

Arise, and let us wander forth,
To yon old mill across the wolds: 20
For look, the sunset, south and north,
Winds all the vale in rosy folds,
And fires your narrow casement glass,
Touching the sullen pool below;
On the chalk-hill the bearded grass
Is dry and dewless. Let us go.

FATIMA

O Love, Love, Love! O withering might!
O sun, that from thy noonday height
Shudderest when I strain my sight,
Throbbing through all thy heat and light, 30
Lo, falling from my constant mind.
Lo, parch'd and wither'd, deaf and blind,
I whirl like leaves in roaring wind.

Last night I wasted hateful hours
Below the city's eastern towers:

I thirsted for the brooks, the showers:
 I roll'd among the tender flowers:
 I crush'd them on my breast, my mouth:
 I look'd athwart the burning drouth
 Of that long desert to the south.

Last night, when some one spoke his name,
 From my swift blood that went and came
 A thousand little shafts of flame
 Were shiver'd in my narrow frame.
 O Love, O fire! once he drew
 With one long kiss my whole soul through
 My lips, as sunlight drinketh dew.

10

• Before he mounts the hill, I know
 He cometh quickly: from below
 Sweet gales, as from deep gardens, blow
 Before him, striking on my brow.
 In my dry brain my spirit soon,
 Down-deepening from swoon to swoon,
 Faints like a dazzled morning moon.

The wind sounds like a silver wire,
 And from beyond the noon a fire
 Is pour'd upon the hills, and nigher
 The skies stoop down in their desire;
 And, isled in sudden seas of light,
 My heart, pierc'd through with fierce delight,
 Bursts into blossom in his sight.

20

My whole soul waiting silently,
 All naked in a sultry sky,
 Droops blinded with his shining eye:
 I *will* possess him or will die.
 I will grow round him in his place,
 Grow, live, die looking on his face,
 Die, dying clasp'd in his embrace.

30

CENONE

There lies a vale in Ida, lovelier
 Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.

The swimming vapour slopes athwart the glen,
 Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine
 And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand
 The lawns and meadow-ledges midway down
 Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars
 The long brook falling through the clov'n ravine
 In cataract after cataract to the sea.
 Behind the valley topmost Gargarus
 Stands up and takes the morning: but in front
 The gorges, opening wide apart, reveal
 Troas and Ilion's column'd citadel,
 The crown of Troas.

10

Hither came at noon
 Mournful Ænone, wandering forlorn
 Of Paris, once her playmate on the hills.
 Her cheek had lost the rose, and round her neck
 Floated her hair or seem'd to float in rest.
 She, leaning on a fragment twined with vine,
 Sang to the stillness, till the mountain-shade
 Sloped downward to her seat from the upper cliff.

"O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
 Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 For now the noonday quiet holds the hill:
 The grasshopper is silent in the grass:
 The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,
 Rests like a shadow, and the cicada sleeps.
 The purple flowers droop: the golden bee
 Is lily-cradled: I alone awake.
 My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love,
 My heart is breaking, and my eyes are dim,
 And I am all aweary of my life.

20

30

"O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
 Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 Hear me, O Earth, hear me, O Hills, O Caves,
 That house the gold-crown'd snake! O mountain
 brooks,
 I am the daughter of a River-God,
 Hear me, for I will speak, and build up all
 My sorrow with my song, as yonder walls
 Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed,

A cloud that gather'd shape: for it may be
That, while I speak of it, a little while
My heart may wander from its deeper woe.

"O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
I waited underneath the dawning hills,
Aloft the mountain lawn was dewy-dark,
And dewy-dark aloft the mountain pine:
Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris,
Leading a jet-black goat white-horn'd, white-hoov'd, 10
Came up from reedy Simois all alone.

"O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Far-off the torrent call'd me from the cleft:
Far up the solitary morning smote
The streaks of virgin snow. With down-dropt eyes
I sat alone: white-breasted like a star
Fronting the dawn he moved; a leopard skin
Droop'd from his shoulder, but his sunny hair
Cluster'd about his temples like a God's;
And his cheek brighten'd as the foam-bow brightens 20
When the wind blows the foam, and all my heart
Went forth to embrace him coming ere he came.

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
He smiled, and opening out his milk-white palm
Disclosed a fruit of pure Hesperian gold,
That smelt ambrosially, and while I look'd
And listen'd, the full-flowing river of speech
Came down upon my heart.

"My own CEnone,
Beautiful-brow'd CEnone, my own soul,
Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind ingrav'n 30
"For the most fair," would seem to award it thine,
As lovelier than whatever Oread haunt
The knolls of Ida, loveliest in all grace
Of movement, and the charm of married brows.'

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
He prest the blossom of his lips to mine,
And added, 'This was cast upon the board,

When all the full-faced presence of the Gods
 Ranged in the halls of Peleus; whereupon
 Rose feud, with question unto whom 'twere due:
 But light-foot Iris brought it yester-eve,
 Delivering, that to me, by common voice
 Elected umpire, Herè comes to-day,
 Pallas and Aphrodite, claiming each
 This meed of fairest. Thou, within the cave
 Behind yon whispering tuft of oldest pine,
 Mayst well behold them unbeheld, unheard
 Hear all, and see thy Paris judge of Gods.'

*Rainbow
goddess*

10

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 It was the deep midnight: one silvery cloud
 Had lost his way between the piney sides
 Of this long glen. Then to the bower they came,
 Naked they came to that smooth-swarded bower,
 And at their feet the crocus brake like fire,
 Violet, amaranthus, and asphodel,
 Lotos and lilies: and a wind arose,
 And overhead the wandering ivy and vine,
 This way and that, in many a wild festoon
 Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs
 With bunch and berry and flower through and
 through.

*daffodil
or narcissus
like flower*

20

"O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 On the tree-tops a crested peacock lit,
 And o'er him flow'd a golden cloud, and lean'd
 Upon him, slowly dropping fragrant dew.
 Then first I heard the voice of her, to whom
 Coming through Heaven, like a light that grows
 Larger and clearer, with one mind the Gods
 Rise up for reverence. She to Paris made
 Proffer of royal power, ample rule
 Unquestioned, overflowing revenue
 Wherewith to embellish state, 'From many a vale
 And river-sunder'd champaign clothed with corn,
 Or labour'd mines undrainable of ore.
 Honour,' she said, 'and homage, tax and toll,
 From many an inland town and haven large,

30

*wild orange
flower*

→

Mast-throng'd beneath her shadowing citadel
In glassy bays among her tallest towers.'

"O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Still she spake on, and still she spake of power,
'Which in all action is the end of all;
Power fitted to the season; wisdom-bred
And thron'd of wisdom—from all neighbour crowns
Alliance and allegiance, till thy hand
Fail from the sceptre-staff. Such boon from me,
From me, Heaven's Queen, Paris, to thee king-born, 10
A shepherd all thy life, but yet king-born,
Should come most welcome, seeing men, in power
Only, are likest gods, who have attain'd
Rest in a happy place and quiet seats
Above the thunder, with undying bliss
In knowledge of their own supremacy.'

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
She ceased, and Paris held the costly fruit
Out at arm's-length, so much the thought of power
Flatter'd his spirit; but Pallas where she stood, 20
Somewhat apart, her clear and bared limbs
O'erthwarted with the brazen-headed spear
Upon her pearly shoulder leaning cold,
The while, above, her full and earnest eye
Over her snow-cold breast and angry cheek
Kept watch, waiting decision, made reply.

"'Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
Yet not for power (power of herself
Would come uncall'd for), but to live by law, 30
Acting the law we live by without fear;
And, because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.'

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Again she said: 'I woo thee not with gifts.
Sequel of guerdon could not alter me
To fairer. Judge thou me by what I am,
So shalt thou find me fairest.

Yet, indeed,

If gazing on divinity disrobed
Thy mortal eyes are frail to judge of fair,
Unbiass'd by self-profit, oh! rest thee sure
That I shall love thee well and cleave to thee,
So that my vigour, wedded to thy blood,
Shall strike within thy pulses, like a God's,
To push thee forward through a life of shocks,
Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow
Sinew'd with action, and the full-grown will, 10
Circled through all experiences, pure law,
Commeasure perfect freedom.'

"Here she ceased,
And Paris ponder'd, and I cried, 'O Paris,
Give it to Pallas!' but he heard me not,
Or hearing would not hear me, woe is me!

"O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Idalian Aphrodite beautiful,
Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian wells,
With rosy slender fingers backward drew 20
From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair
Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat
And shoulder: from the violets her light foot
Shone rosy-white, and o'er her rounded form
Between the shadows of the vine-bunches
Floated the glowing sunlights, as she moved.

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
She with a subtle smile in her mild eyes,
The herald of her triumph, drawing nigh
Half-whispered in his ear, 'I promise thee 30
The fairest and most loving wife in Greece.'
She spoke and laugh'd: I shut my sight for fear:
But when I look'd, Paris had raised his arm,
And I beheld great Herè's angry eyes,
As she withdrew into the golden cloud,
And I was left alone within the bower;
And from that time to this I am alone,
And I shall be alone until I die.

"Yet, mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Fairest—why fairest wife? am I not fair?
My love hath told me so a thousand times.
Methinks I must be fair, for yesterday,
When I pass'd by, a wild and wanton pard,
Eyed like the evening star, with playful tail
Crouch'd fawning in the weed. Most loving is she?
Ah me, my mountain shepherd, that my arms
Were wound about thee, and my hot lips prest
Close, close to thine in that quick-falling dew 10
Of fruitful kisses, thick as Autumn rains
Flash in the pools of whirling Simois.

"O mother, hear me yet before I die.
They came, they cut away my tallest pines,
My dark tall pines, that plumed the craggy ledge
High over the blue gorge, and all between
The snowy peak and snow-white cataract
Foster'd the callow eaglet—from beneath
Whose thick mysterious boughs in the dark morn,
The panther's roar came muffled, while I sat 20
Low in the valley. Never, never more
Shall lone Cēnone see the morning mist
Sweep through them; never see them overlaid
With narrow moonlit slips of silver cloud,
Between the loud stream and the trembling stars.

"O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I wish that somewhere in the ruin'd folds,
Among the fragments tumbled from the glens,
Or the dry thickets, I could meet with her,
The Abominable, that uninvited came 30
Into the fair Peleïan banquet-hall,
And cast the golden fruit upon the board,
And bred this change; that I might speak my mind,
And tell her to her face how much I hate
Her presence, hated both of Gods and men.

"O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hath he not sworn his love a thousand times,
In this green valley, under this green hill,
Ev'n on this hand, and sitting on this stone?

Seal'd it with kisses? water'd it with tears?
O happy tears, and how unlike to these!
O happy Heaven, how canst thou see my face?
O happy earth, how canst thou bear my weight?
O death, death, death, thou ever-floating cloud,
There are enough unhappy on this earth,
Pass by the happy souls, that love to live:
I pray thee, pass before my light of life,
And shadow all my soul, that I may die.
Thou weighest heavy on the heart within,
Weigh heavy on my eyelids: let me die.

10

“O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I will not die alone, for fiery thoughts
Do shape themselves within me, more and more,
Whereof I catch the issue, as I hear
Dead sounds at night come from the inmost hills,
Like footsteps upon wool. I dimly see
My far-off doubtful purpose, as a mother
Conjectures of the features of her child
Ere it is born: her child!—a shudder comes
Across me: never child be born of me,
Unblest, to vex me with his father's eyes!

20

“O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hear me, O earth. I will not die alone,
Lest their shrill happy laughter come to me
Walking the cold and starless road of Death
Uncomforted, leaving my ancient love
With the Greek woman. I will rise and go
Down into Troy, and ere the stars come forth
Talk with the wild Cassandra, for she says
A fire dances before her, and a sound
Rings ever in her ears of armed men.
What this may be I know not, but I know
That, wheresoe'er I am by night and day,
All earth and air seem only burning fire.”

30

THE SISTERS

We were two daughters of one race:
She was the fairest in the face:

The wind is blowing in turret and tree.
They were together, and she fell;
Therefore revenge became me well.
O the Earl was fair to see!

She died: she went to burning flame:
She mix'd her ancient blood with shame.
The wind is howling in turret and tree.
Whole weeks and months, and early and late,
To win his love I lay in wait.
O the Earl was fair to see!

10

I made a feast; I bade him come;
I won his love, I brought him home.
The wind is roaring in turret and tree.
And after supper, on a bed,
Upon my lap he laid his head.
O the Earl was fair to see!

I kiss'd his eyelids into rest:
His ruddy cheek upon my breast.
The wind is raging in turret and tree.
I hated him with the hate of hell,
But I loved his beauty passing well.
O the Earl was fair to see!

20

I rose up in the silent night:
I made my dagger sharp and bright.
The wind is raving in turret and tree.
As half-asleep his breath he drew,
Three times I stabb'd him through and through.
O the Earl was fair to see!

I curl'd and comb'd his comely head,
He look'd so grand when he was dead.
The wind is blowing in turret and tree.
I wrapt his body in the sheet,
And laid him at his mother's feet.
O the Earl was fair to see!

30

TO ———

WITH THE FOLLOWING POEM

I send you here a sort of allegory,
 (For you will understand it) of a soul,
 A sinful soul possessed of many gifts,
 A spacious garden full of flowering weeds,
 A glorious Devil, large in heart and brain,
 That did love Beauty only (Beauty seen
 In all varieties of mould and mind),
 And Knowledge for its beauty; or if Good,
 Good only for its beauty, seeing not
 That Beauty, Good, and Knowledge, are three 10
 sisters

That dote upon each other, friends to man,
 Living together under the same roof,
 And never can be sunder'd without tears.
 And he that shuts Love out, in turn shall be
 Shut out from Love, and on her threshold lie
 Howling in outer darkness. Not for this
 Was common clay ta'en from the common earth,
 Moulded by God, and temper'd with the tears
 Of angels to the perfect shape of man.

THE PALACE OF ART

I built my soul a lordly pleasure-house, 20
 Wherein at ease for aye to dwell.
 I said, "O Soul, make merry and carouse,
 Dear soul, for all is well."

A huge crag-platform, smooth as burnish'd brass,
 I chose. The ranged ramparts bright
 From level meadow-bases of deep grass
 Suddenly scaled the light.

Thereon I built it firm. Of ledge or shelf
 The rock rose clear, or winding stair.
 My soul would live alone unto herself 30
 In her high palace there.

And "while the world runs round and round," I
said,

"Reign thou apart, a quiet king,
Still as, while Saturn whirls, his steadfast shade
Sleeps on his luminous ring."

To which my soul made answer readily :

"Trust me, in bliss I shall abide
In this great mansion, that is built for me,
So royal-rich and wide."

* * * * *

Four courts I made, East, West, and South and
North,

In each a squared lawn, wherefrom 10
The golden gorge of dragons spouted forth
A flood of fountain-foam.

And round the cool green courts there ran a row
Of cloisters, branched like mighty woods.
Echoing all night to that sonorous flow
Of spouted fountain-floods.

And round the roofs a gilded gallery
That lent broad verge to distant lands,
Far as the wild swan wings, to where the sky
Dipt down to sea and sands. 20

From those four jets four currents in one swell
Across the mountain stream'd below
In misty folds, that floating as they fell
Lit up a torrent-bow.

And high on every peak a statue seem'd
To hang on tiptoe, tossing up
A cloud of incense of all odour steam'd
From out a golden cup.

So that she thought, "And who shall gaze
My palace with unblinded eyes, 30
While this great bow will waver in the sun,
And that sweet incense rise?"

For that sweet incense rose and never fail'd,
And, while day sank or mounted higher,
The light ærial gallery, golden-rail'd,
Burnt like a fringe of fire.

Likewise the deep-set windows, stain'd and traced,
Would seem slow-flaming crimson fires
From shadow'd grotts of arches interlaced,
And tipt with frost-like spires.

* * * * *

Full of long-sounding corridors it was,
That over-vaulted grateful gloom, 10
Through which the livelong day my soul did pass,
Well-pleased, from room to room.

Full of great rooms and small the palace stood,
All various, each a perfect whole
From living Nature, fit for every mood
And change of my still soul.

For some were hung with arras green and blue,
Showing a gaudy summer-morn,
Where with puff'd cheek the belted hunter blew
His wreathed bugle-horn. 20

One seem'd all dark and red—a tract of sand,
And some one pacing there alone,
Who paced for ever in a glimmering land,
Lit with a low large moon.

One show'd an iron coast and angry waves,
You seem'd to hear them climb and fall
And roar rock-thwarted under bellowing caves,
Beneath the windy wall.

And one, a full-fed river winding slow
By herds upon an endless plain, 30
The ragged rims of thunder brooding low,
With shadow-streaks of rain.

And one, the reapers at their sultry toil.
 In front they bound the sheaves. Behind
 Were realms of upland, prodigal in oil,
 And hoary to the wind.

And one, a foreground black with stones and slags,
 Beyond, a line of heights, and higher
 All barr'd with long white cloud the scornful crags,
 And highest, snow and fire.

And one, an English home—gray twilight pour'd
 On dewy pastures, dewy trees, 10
 Softer than sleep—and all things in order stored,
 A haunt of ancient Peace.

Nor these alone, but every landscape fair,
 As fit for every mood of mind,
 Or gay, or grave, or sweet, or stern, was there,
 Not less than truth design'd.

* * * * *

Or the maid-mother by a crucifix,
 In tracts of pasture sunny-warm,
 Beneath branch-work of costly sardonyx
 Sat smiling, babe in arm. 20

Or in a clear-walled city on the sea,
 Near gilded organ-pipes, her hair
 Wound with white roses, slept St. Cecily;
 An angel look'd at her.

Or thronging all one porch of Paradise,
 A group of Houris bow'd to see
 The dying Islamite, with hands and eyes
 That said, We wait for thee.

Or mythic Uther's deeply-wounded son
 In some fair space of sloping greens 30
 Lay, dozing in the vale of Avalon,
 And watch'd by weeping queens.

Or hollowing one hand against his ear
To list a footfall ere he saw
The wood-nymph, stay'd the Ausonian king to hear
Of wisdom and of law.

Or over hills with peaky tops engrail'd,
And many a tract of palm and rice,
The throne of Indian Cama slowly sail'd
A summer fann'd with spice.

Or sweet Europa's mantle blew unclasp'd,
From off her shoulder backward borne; 10
From one hand droop'd a crocus; one hand grasp'd
The mild bull's golden horn.

Or else flush'd Ganymede, his rosy thigh
Half-buried in the Eagle's down,
Sole as a flying star shot through the sky
Above the pillar'd town.

Nor these alone: but every legend fair
Which the supreme Caucasian mind
Carved out of Nature for itself, was there,
Not less than life, design'd. 20

* * * * *

Then in the towers I placed great bells that swung,
Moved of themselves, with silver sound;
And with choice paintings of wise men I hung
The royal dais round.

For there was Milton like a seraph strong;
Beside him Shakespeare bland and mild;
And there the world-worn Dante grasp'd his song,
And somewhat grimly smiled.

And there the Ionian father of the rest:
A million wrinkles carved his skin; 30
A hundred winters snow'd upon his breast,
From cheek and throat and chin.

Above, the fair hall-ceiling stately-set
Many an arch high up did lift,
And angels rising and descending met
With interchange of gift.

Below was all mosaic choicely plann'd
With cycles of the human tale
Of this wide world, the times of every land
So wrought, they will not fail.

The people here, a beast of burden slow,
Toil'd onward, prick'd with goads and stings; 10
Here play'd a tiger, rolling to and fro
The heads and crowns of kings;

Here rose an athlete, strong to break or bind
All force in bonds that might endure;
And here once more like some sick man declined,
And trusted any cure.

But over these she trod: and those great bells
Began to chime. She took her throne:
She sat betwixt the shining Oriels,
To sing her songs alone. 20

And through the topmost Oriels' colour'd flame
Two godlike faces gazed below;
Plato the wise, and large-brow'd Verulam,
The first of those who know.

And all those names, that in their motion were
Full-welling fountain-heads of change,
Betwixt the slender shafts were blazon'd fair
In diverse raiment strange:

Through which the lights, rose, amber, emerald,
blue,
Flush'd in her temples and her eyes, 30
And from her lips, as morn from Memmon, drew
Rivers of melodies.

No nightingale delighteth to prolong •
Her low preamble all alone,
More than my soul to hear her echo'd song
Throb through the ribbed stone;

Singing and murmuring in her feastful mirth,
Joying to feel herself alive,
Lord over Nature, Lord of the visible earth,
Lord of the senses five;

Communing with herself: "All these are mine,
And let the world have peace of wars, 10
'Tis one to me." She—when young night divine
Crown'd dying day with stars,

Making sweet close of his delicious toils—
Lit light in wreaths and anadems,
And pure quintessences of precious oils
In hollow'd moons of gems,

To mimic heaven; and clapt her hands and cried,
"I marvel if my still delight
In this great house so royal-rich, and wide,
Be flatter'd to the height. 20

"O all things fair to sate my various eyes!
O shapes and hues that please me well!
O silent faces of the Great and Wise,
My Gods, with whom I dwell!

"O God-like isolation which art mine,
I can but count thee perfect gain,
What time I watch the darkening droves of swine
That range on yonder plain.

"In filthy sloughs they roll a prurient skin,
They graze and wallow, breed and sleep; 30
And oft some brainless devil enters in,
And drives them to the deep."

Then of the moral instinct would she prate,
And of the rising from the dead,

As hers by right of full-accomplish'd Fate;
And at the last she said:

"I take possession of man's mind and deed.
I care not what the sects may brawl.
I sit as God holding no form of creed,
But contemplating all."

* * * * *

Full oft the riddle of the painful earth
Flashed through her as she sat alone,
Yet not the less held she her solemn mirth,
And intellectual throne.

10

And so she throve and prosper'd: so three years
She prosper'd: on the fourth she fell,
Like Herod, when the shout was in his ears,
Struck through with pangs of hell.

Lest she should fail and perish utterly,
God, before whom ever lie bare
The abysmal deeps of Personality,
Plagued her with sore despair.

When she would think, where'er she turn'd her sight,
The airy hand confusion wrought,
Wrote "Mene, mene," and divided quite
The kingdom of her thought.

20

Deep dread and loathing of her solitude
Fell on her, from which mood was born
Scorn of herself; again, from out that mood
Laughter at her self-scorn.

What! is not this my place of strength," she said,
"My spacious mansion built for me,
Whereof the strong foundation-stones were laid
Since my first memory?"

30

But in dark corners of her palace stood
Uncertain shapes; and unawares

On white-eyed phantasms weeping tears of blood,
And horrible nightmares,

And hollow shades enclosing hearts of flame,
And, with dim fretted foreheads all,
On corpses three-months-old at noon she came,
That stood against the wall.

A spot of dull stagnation, without light
Or power of movement, seem'd my soul,
'Mid onward-sloping motions infinite
Making for one sure goal.

10

A still salt pool, lock'd in with bars of sand;
Left on the shore; that hears all night
The plunging seas draw backward from the land
Their moon-led waters white.

A star that with the choral starry dance
Join'd not, but stood, and standing saw
The hollow orb of moving Circumstance
Roll'd round by one fix'd law.

Back on herself her serpent pride had curl'd.
"No voice," she shriek'd in that lone hall,
"No voice breaks through the stillness of this world:
One deep, deep silence all!"

20

She, mouldering with the dull earth's mouldering sod,
Inwapt tenfold in slothful shame,
Lay there exiled from eternal God,
Lost to her place and name;

And death and life she hated equally,
And nothing saw, for her despair,
But dreadful time, dreadful eternity,
No comfort anywhere;

30

Remaining utterly confused with fears,
And ever worse with growing time,
And ever unrelieved by dismal tears,
And all alone in crime:

Shut up as in a crumbling tomb, girt round
 With blackness as a solid wall,
 Far off she seem'd to hear the dully sound
 Of human footsteps fall.

As in strange lands a traveller walking slow,
 In doubt and great perplexity,
 A little before moon-rise hears the low
 Moan of an unknown sea;

And knows not if it be thunder or a sound
 Of rocks thrown down, or one deep cry 10
 Of great wild beasts; then thinketh, "I have found
 A new land, but I die."

She howl'd aloud, "I am on fire within.
 There comes no murmur of reply.
 What is it that will take away my sin,
 And save me lest I die?"

So when four years were wholly finished,
 She threw her royal robes away.
 "Make me a cottage in the vale," she said,
 "Where I may mourn and pray. 20

"Yet pull not down my palace towers, that are
 So lightly, beautifully built:
 Perchance I may return with others there
 When I have purged my guilt."

THE LOTOS-EATERS

"Courage!" he said, and pointed toward the land,
 "This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon."
 In the afternoon they came unto a land,
 In which it seemed always afternoon.
 All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
 Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
 Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;

And like a downward smoke, the slender stream
 Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,
 Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
 And some through wavering lights and shadows
 broke,

Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
 They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
 From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops,
 Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
 Stood sunset-flush'd: and, dew'd with showery drops, ¹⁰
 Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmed sunset linger'd low adown
 In the red West: through mountain clefts the dale
 Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
 Border'd with palm, and many a winding vale
 And meadow, set with slender galingale; — *an English*
 A land where all things always seem'd the same! *sedg*
 And round about the keel with faces pale,
 Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
 The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came. ²⁰

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
 Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
 To each, but whoso did receive of them,
 And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
 Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
 On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,
 His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;
 And deep asleep he seem'd, yet all awake,
 And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand, ³⁰
 Between the sun and moon upon the shore;
 And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
 Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore
 Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,
 Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
 Then some one said, "We will return no more;"

And all at once they sang, "Our island home
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam."

CHORIC SONG

I

There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful
skies.

Here are cool mosses deep,
And through the moss the ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

10

II

Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,
And utterly consum'd with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from weariness?
All things have rest: why should we toil alone,
We only toil, who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan,
Still from one sorrow to another thrown:
Nor ever fold our wings,
And cease from wanderings,
Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;
Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,
"There is no joy but calm!"

20

Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of
things?

III

Lo! in the middle of the wood,
The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud
With winds upon the branch, and there

Sensation

Thought

Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
 Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon
 Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow
 Falls, and floats adown the air.
 Lo! sweeten'd with the summer light,
 The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
 Drops in a silent autumn night.
 All its allotted length of days,
 The flower ripens in its place,
 Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
 Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

10

IV

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
 Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.
 Death is the end of life; ah, why
 Should life all labour be?
 Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
 And in a little while our lips are dumb.
 Let us alone. What is it that will last?
 All things are taken from us, and become
 Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.
 Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
 To war with evil? Is there any peace
 In ever climbing up the climbing wave?
 All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
 In silence; ripen, fall and cease:
 Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful
 ease.

20

V

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
 With half-shut eyes ever to seem
 Falling asleep in a half-dream!
 To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
 Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height;
 To hear each other's whisper'd speech;
 Eating the Lotos day by day,
 To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
 And tender curving lines of creamy spray;

30

To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
 To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;
 To muse and brood and live again in memory,
 With those old faces of our infancy.
 Heap'd over with a mound of grass,
 Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!

VI

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
 And dear the last embraces of our wives
 And their warm tears: but all hath suffer'd change;
 For surely now our household hearths are cold: 10
 Our sons inherit us: our looks are strange:
 And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.
 Or else the island princes over-bold
 Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings
 Before them of the ten years' war in Troy,
 And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.
 Is there confusion in the little isle?
 Let what is broken so remain.
 The Gods are hard to reconcile:
 'Tis hard to settle order once again.
 There is confusion worse than death,
 Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
 Long labour unto aged breath,
 Sore task to hearts worn out with many wars
 And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

~~Is there confusion?~~
 Is a death
 confusion?
 — Or is
 this
 implied?

VII

But propt on beds of amaranth and moly,
 How sweet (while warm airs lull us blowing lowly)
 With half-dropt eyelids still,
 Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
 To watch the long bright river drawing slowly 30
 His waters from the purple hill—
 To hear the dewy echoes calling
 From cave to cave through the thick-twined vine—
 To watch the emerald-colour'd water falling
 Through many a woven acanthus-wreath divine!
 Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,

Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out beneath the
pine.

VIII

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak:
The Lotos blows by every winding creek:
All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone:
Through every hollow cave and alley lone
Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-
dust is blown.

We have had enough of action, and of motion we,
Roll'd to starboard, roll'd to larboard, when the surge
was seething free,

Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-
fountains in the sea.

Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind, 10

In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined

On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.

For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are
hurl'd

Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are
lightly curl'd

Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleam-
ing world:

Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted
lands,

Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring
deeps and fiery sands,

Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking
ships, and praying hands.

But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful
song

Steaming up, lamentation and an ancient tale of 20
wrong,

Like a tale of little meaning though the words are
strong;

Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the
soil,

Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring
toil,

Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil;

Conclusion

Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whisper'd, down in hell
 Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys dwell,
 Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.
 Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
 Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave
 and oar:
 O rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander
 more!

A DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN

I read, before my eyelids dropt their shade,
"The Legend of Good Women," long ago
 Sung by the morning star of song, who made
 His music heard below;

10

Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath
 Preluded those melodious bursts, that fill
 The spacious times of great Elizabeth
 With sounds that echo still.

And, for a while, the knowledge of his art
 Held me above the subject, as strong gales
 Hold swollen clouds from raining, though my heart,
 Brimful of those wild tales,

Charged both mine eyes with tears. In every land
 I saw wherever light illumineth,
 Beauty and anguish walking hand in hand
 The downward slope to death.

20

Those far-renowned brides of ancient song
 Peopled the hollow dark, like burning stars,
 And I heard sounds of insult, shame and wrong,
 And trumpets blown for wars;

And clattering flints batter'd with clanging hoofs;
 And I saw crowds in column'd sanctuaries;

And forms that pass'd at windows and on roofs
Of marble palaces;

Corpses across the threshold; heroes tall
Dislodging pinnacle and parapet,
Upon the tortoise creeping to the wall;
Lances in ambush set;

And high shrine-doors burst through with heated
blasts
That run before the fluttering tongues of fire;
White surf wind-scatter'd over sails and masts,
And ever climbing higher; 10

Squadrons and squares of men in brazen plates,
Scaffolds, still sheets of water, divers woes,
Ranges of glimmering vaults with iron grates,
And hush'd seraglios.

So shape chased shape as swift as, when to land
Bluster the winds and tides the self-same way,
Crisp foam-flakes scud along the level sand,
Torn from the fringe of spray.

I started once, or seem'd to start in pain,
Resolved on noble things, and strove to speak, 20
As when a great thought strikes along the brain,
And flushes all the cheek.

And once my arm was lifted to hew down
A cavalier from off his saddle-bow,
That bore a lady from a leaguer'd town
And then, I know not how,

All those sharp fancies, by down-lapsing thought
Stream'd onward, lost their edges, and did
creep
Roll'd on each other, rounded, smooth'd, and
brought
Into the gulfs of sleep. 30

At last methought that I had wandered far
 In an old wood: fresh-wash'd in coolest dew,
 The maiden splendours of the morning star
 Shook in the steadfast blue.

Enormous elm-tree-boles did stoop and lean
 Upon the dusky brushwood underneath
 Their broad curved branches, fledged with clearest
 green,
 New from its silken sheath.

The dim red morn had died, her journey done,
 And with dead lips smiled at the twilight plain, 10
 Half-fall'n across the threshold of the sun,
 Never to rise again.

There was no motion in the dumb dead air,
 Not any song of bird or sound of rill;
 Gross darkness of the inner sepulchre
 Is not so deadly still

As that wide forest. Growths of jasmine turn'd
 Their humid arms festooning tree to tree.
 And at the root through lush green grasses burn'd
 The red anemone.

20

I knew the flowers, I knew the leaves, I knew
 The tearful glimmer of the languid dawn
 On those long, rank, dark wood-walks drench'd in
 dew,
 Leading from lawn to lawn.

The smell of violets, hidden in the green,
 Pour'd back into my empty soul and frame
 The times when I remember to have been
 Joyful and free from blame.

And from within me a clear under-tone
 Thrill'd through mine ears in that unblissful 30
 clime,
 "Pass freely through: the wood is all thine own,
 Until the end of time."

A DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN

At length I saw a lady ~~within call,~~
Still⁸³er than chisell'd marble, standing there;
A daughter of the gods, divinely tall,
And most divinely fair.

Her loveliness with shame and with surprise
Froze my swift speech: she turning on my face
The star-like sorrows of immortal eyes,
Spoke slowly in her place:

"I had great beauty: ask thou not my name:
No one can be more wise than destiny. 10
Many drew swords and died. Where'er I came
I brought calamity."

"No marvel, sovereign lady: in fair field
Myself for such a face had boldly died,"
I answer'd free; and turning I appeal'd
To one that stood beside.

But she, with sick and scornful looks averse,
To her full height her stately stature draws;
"My youth," she said, "was blasted with a curse:
This woman was the cause. 20

"I was cut off from hope in that sad place,
Which yet to name my spirit loathes and fears:
My father held his hand upon his face;
I, blinded with my tears,

"Still strove to speak: my voice was thick with sighs
As in a dream. Dimly I could descry
The stern black-bearded kings with wolfish eyes,
Waiting to see me die.

"The high masts flicker'd as they lay afloat;
The crowds, the temples, waver'd, and the 30
shore,
The bright death quiver'd at the victim's throat;
Touch'd; and I knew no more."

Whereto the other with a downward brow:

"I would the white cold heavy-plunging foam,
Whirl'd by the wind, had roll'd me deep below,
Then when I left my home."

Her slow full words sank through the silence drear,
As thunder-drops fall on a sleeping sea:

Sudden I heard a voice that cried, "Come here,
That I may look on thee."

I turning saw, thron'd on a flowery rise,

One sitting on a crimson scarf unroll'd;

10

A queen, with swarthy cheeks and bold black eyes,
Brow-bound with burning gold.

She, flashing forth a haughty smile, began:

"I govern'd men by change, and so I sway'd
All moods. 'Tis long since I have seen a man.
Once, like the moon, I made

"The ever-shifting currents of the blood
According to my humour ebb and flow.

I have no men to govern in this wood:

That makes my only woe.

20

"Nay—yet it chafes me that I could not bend
One will; nor tame and tutor with mine eye
That dull cold-blooded Cæsar. Prythee, friend,
Where is Mark Antony?

"The man, my lover, with whom I rode sublime
On Fortune's neck: we sat as God by God:
The Nilus would have risen before his time
And flooded at our nod.

"We drank the Libyan Sun to sleep, and lit
Lamps which outburn'd Canopus. Oh my life 30
In Egypt! oh the dalliance and the wit,
The flattery and the strife,

"And the wild kiss, when fresh from war's alarms,
My Hercules, my Roman Antony,

My mailed Bacchus leapt into my arms,
Contented there to die!

"And there he died: and when I heard my name
Sigh'd forth with life I would not brook my
fear

Of the other: with a worm I balk'd his fame.
What else was left? look here!"

(With that she tore her robe apart, and half
The polish'd argent of her breast to sight
Laid bare. Thereto she pointed with a laugh,
Showing the aspick's bite.)

10

"I died a Queen. The Roman soldier found
Me lying dead, my crown about my brows,
A name for ever!—lying rob'd and crown'd,
Worthy a Roman spouse."

Her warbling voice, a lyre of wildest range
Struck by all passion, did fall down and glance
From tone to tone, and glided through all change
Of liveliest utterance.

When she made pause I knew not for delight;
Because with sudden motion from the ground 20
She raised her piercing orbs, and filled with light
The interval of sound.

Still with their fires Love tipt his keenest darts;
As once they drew into two burning rings
All beams of Love, melting the mighty hearts
Of captains and of kings.

Slowly my sense undazzled. Then I heard
A noise of some one coming through the lawn,
And singing clearer than the crested bird,
That clasps his wings at dawn:

30

"The torrent brooks of hallow'd Israel
From craggy hollows pouring, late and soon,

Jephthah's daughter - Vid. Judges XI

Note religious images

Sound all night long, in falling through the dell,
Far-heard beneath the moon.

"The balmy moon of blessed Israel
Floods all the deep-blue gloom with beams
divine;
All night the splinter'd crags that wall the dell
With spires of silver shine."

As one that museth where broad sunshine laves
The lawn by some cathedral, through the door
Hearing the holy organ rolling waves
Of sound on roof and floor

10

Within, and anthem sung, is charm'd and tied
To where he stands,—so stood I, when that
flow
Of music left the lips of her that died
To save her father's vow;

The daughter of the warrior Gileadite,
A maiden pure; as when she went along
From Mizpah's tower'd gate with welcome light,
With timbrel and with song.

My words leapt forth: "Heaven heads the count of
crimes
With that wild oath." She render'd answer 20
high:

"Not so, nor once alone; a thousand times
I would be born and die.

"Single I grew, like some green plant, whose root
Creeps to the garden water-pipes beneath,
Feeding the flower; but ere my flower to fruit
Changed, I was ripe for death.

"My God, my land, my father—these did move
Me from my bliss of life, that Nature gave,
Lower'd softly with a threefold cord of love
Down to a silent grave.

30

"And I went mourning, 'No fair Hebrew boy
Shall smile away my maiden blame among
The Hebrew mothers'—emptied of all joy,
Leaving the dance and song.

"Leaving the olive-gardens far below,
Leaving the promise of my bridal bower
The valleys of grape-loaded vines that glow
Beneath the battled tower.

"The light white cloud swam over us. Anon
We heard the lion roaring from his den;
We saw the large white stars rise one by one,
Or, from the darken'd glen,

10

"Saw God divide the night with flying flame,
And thunder on the everlasting hills.
I heard Him, for He spake, and grief became
A solemn scorn of ills.

"When the next moon was roll'd into the sky,
Strength came to me that equall'd my desire.
How beautiful a thing it was to die
For God and for my sire!

20

"It comforts me in this one thought to dwell,
That I subdued me to my father's will;
Because the kiss he gave me, ere I fell,
Sweetens the spirit still.

"Moreover it is written that my race
Hew'd Ammon, hip and thigh, from Aroer
On Arnon unto Minnith." Here her face
Glow'd, as I look'd at her.

She lock'd her lips: she left me where I stood:
"Glory to God," she sang, and pass'd afar,
Thridding the sombre boskage of the wood,
Toward the morning-star.

30

Losing her carol I stood pensively,
As one that from a casement leans his head

When midnight bells cease ringing suddenly,
And the old year is dead

"Alas! alas!" a low voice, full of care,
Murmur'd beside me: "Turn and look on me:
I am that Rosamond, whom men call fair,
If what I was I be.

"Would I had been some maiden coarse and poor!
O me, that I should ever see the light!
Those dragon eyes of anger'd Eleanor
Do hunt me, day and night."

10

She ceased in tears, fallen from hope and trust.
To whom the Egyptian: "Oh, you tamely died!
You should have clung to Fulvia's waist, and thrust
The dagger through her side."

*Mitony's
wife*

With that sharp sound the white dawn's creeping
beams
Stol'n to my brain, dissolved the mystery
Of folded sleep. The captain of my dreams
Ruled in the eastern sky.

Venus

Morn broaden'd on the borders of the dark,
Ere I saw her, who clasp'd in her last trance
Her murder'd father's head, or Joan of Arc,
A light of ancient France;
Or her, who knew that Love can vanquish Death,
Who kneeling, with one arm about her king,
Drew forth the poison with her balmy breath,
Sweet as new buds in Spring.

*Margaret
Roper
daughter
of Sir Thomas
More*

Eleanor, queen of Edward I

No memory labours longer from the deep
Gold-mines of thought to lift the hidden ore
That glimpses, moving up, than I from sleep
To gather and tell o'er

30

Each little sound and sight. With what dull pain
Compass'd, how eagerly I sought to strike

Into that wondrous track of dreams again!
But no two dreams are like.

As when a soul laments, which hath been blest,
Desiring what is mingled with past years,
In yearnings that can never be exprest
By signs or groans or tears;

Because all words, though cull'd with choicest art,
Failing to give the bitter of the sweet,
Wither beneath the palate, and the heart
Faints, faded by its heat.

10

DEATH OF THE OLD YEAR

Full knee-deep lies the winter snow
And the winter winds are wearily sighing:
Toll ye the church-bell sad and slow,
And tread softly and speak low,
For the old year lies a-dying.
Old year, you must not die;
You came to us so readily,
You lived with us so steadily,
Old year, you shall not die.

He lieth still: he doth not move:
He will not see the dawn of day.
He hath no other life above.
He gave me a friend, and a true true-love,
And the New-year will take 'em away.
Old year, you must not go;
So long as you have been with us,
Such joy as you have seen with us.
Old year, you shall not go.

20

He froth'd his bumpers to the brim!
A jollier year we shall not see.
But though his eyes are waxing dim,
And though his foes speak ill of him,
He was a friend to me.
Old year, you shall not die;
We did so laugh and cry with you,

30

I've half a mind to die with you,
Old year, if you must die.

He was full of joke and jest,
But all his merry quips are o'er.
To see him die, across the waste
His son and heir doth ride post-haste,
But he'll be dead before
Every one for his own.
The night is starry and cold, my friend,
And the New-year blithe and bold, my friend, 10
Comes up to take his own.

How hard he breathes! over the snow
I heard just now the crowing cock.
The shadows flicker to and fro:
The cricket chirps: the light burns low:
'Tis nearly twelve o'clock.
Shake hands, before you die.
Old year, we'll dearly rue for you:
What is it we can do for you?
Speak out before you die.

20

His face is growing sharp and thin.
Alack! our friend is gone.
Close up his eyes; tie up his chin:
Step from the corpse, and let him in
That standeth there alone,
And waiteth at the door.
There's a new foot on the floor, my friend,
And a new face at the door, my friend,
A new face at the door.

TO J. S.

The wind, that beats the mountain, blows
More softly round the open wold;
And gently comes the world to those
That are cast in gentle mould.

30

And me this knowledge bolder made,
Or else I had not dared to flow

In these words toward you, and invade
Even with a verse your holy woe.

'Tis strange that those we lean on most,
Those in whose laps our limbs are nursed,
Fall into shadow, soonest lost:
Those we love first are taken first.

God gives us love—something to love
He lends us; but, when love is grown
To ripeness, that on which it throve
Falls off, and love is left alone.

10

This is the curse of time. Alas!
In grief I am not all unlearn'd:
Once through mine own doors Death did pass;
One went, who never hath return'd.

He will not smile—not speak to me
Once more. Two years his chair is seen
Empty before us. That was he
Without whose life I had not been.

Your loss is rarer; for this star
Rose with you through a little arc
Of heaven, nor having wander'd far
Shot on the sudden into dark.

20

I knew your brother: his mute dust
I honour, and his living worth;
A man more pure and bold and just
Was never born into the earth.

I have not look'd upon you nigh,
Since that dear soul hath fall'n asleep.
Great Nature is more wise than I:
I will not tell you not to weep.

30

And though mine own eyes fill with dew,
Drawn from the spirit through the brain,
I will not even preach to you,
“Weep, weeping dulls the inward pain.”

Let Grief be her own mistress still,
She loveth her own anguish deep •
More than much pleasure. Let her will
Be done—to weep or not to weep.

I will not say, “God’s ordinance
Of Death is blown in every wind”;
For that is not a common chance
That takes away a noble mind.

His memory long will live alone
In all our hearts, as mournful light
That broods above the fallen sun,
And dwells in heaven half the night.

10

Vain solace! Memory standing near
Cast down her eyes, and in her throat
Her voice seem’d distant, and a tear
Dropt on the letters as I wrote.

I wrote I know not what. In truth,
How *should* I soothe you anyway,
Who miss the brother of your youth?
Yet something I did wish to say:

20

For he too was a friend to me:
Both are my friends, and my true breast
Bleedeth for both; yet it may be
That only silence suiteth best.

Words weaker than your grief would make
Grief more. ’Twere better I should cease;
Although myself could almost take
The place of him that sleeps in peace.

Sleep sweetly, tender heart, in peace:
Sleep, holy spirit, blessed soul,
While the stars burn, the moons increase,
And the great ages onward roll.

30

Sleep till the end, true soul and sweet.
Nothing comes to thee new or strange.

Sleep full of rest from head to feet;
Lie still, dry dust, secure of change.

ST. AGNES' EVE

Deep on the convent-roof the snows
Are sparkling to the moon:
My breath to heaven like vapour goes:
May my soul follow soon!
The shadows of the convent-towers
Slant down the snowy sward,
Still creeping with the creeping hours
That lead me to my Lord:
Make Thou my spirit pure and clear
As are the frosty skies,
Or this first snowdrop of the year
That in my bosom lies.

10

As these white robes are soil'd and dark,
To yonder shining ground;
As this pale taper's earthly spark,
To yonder argent round;
So shows my soul before the Lamb,
My spirit before Thee:
So in mine earthly house I am,
To that I hope to be.
Break up the heavens, O Lord! and far,
Through all yon starlight keen,
Draw me, thy bride, a glittering star,
In raiment white and clean.

20

He lifts me to the golden doors;
The flashes come and go;
All heaven bursts her starry floors,
And strows her lights below,
And deepens on and up! the gates
Roll back, and far within
For me the Heavenly Bridegroom waits,
To make me pure of sin.
The sabbaths of Eternity,
One sabbath deep and wide—

30

A light upon the shining sea—
The Bridegroom with his bride!

SIR GALAHAD

My good blade carves the casques of men,
My tough lance thrusteth sure,
My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure.
The shattering trumpet shrilleth high,
The hard brands shiver on the steel,
The splinter'd spear-shafts crack and fly.
The horse and rider reel :
They reel, they roll in clanging lists;
And when the tide of combat stands,
Perfume and flowers fall in showers,
That lightly rain from ladies' hands.

10

How sweet are looks that ladies bend
On whom their favours fall!
For them I battle till the end,
To save from shame and thrall:
But all my heart is drawn above,
My knees are bow'd in crypt and shrine :
I never felt the kiss of love,
Nor maiden's hand in mine.
More bounteous aspects on me beam,
Me mightier transports move and thrill;
So keep I fair through faith and prayer
A virgin heart in work and will.

20

When down the stormy crescent goes,
A light before me swims,
Between dark stems the forest glows,
I hear a noise of hymns :
Then by some secret shrine I ride;
I hear a voice, but none are there;
The stalls are void, the doors are wide,
The tapers burning fair.
Fair gleams the snowy altar-cloth,
The silver vessels sparkle clean,

30

The shrill bell rings, the censer swings,
And solemn chaunts resound between.

Sometimes on lonely mountain meres

I find a magic bark;

I leap on board: no helmsman steers:

I float till all is dark.

A gentle sound, an awful light!

Three angels bear the holy Grail:

With folded feet, in stoles of white,

On sleeping wings they sail.

10

Ah, blessed vision! blood of God!

My spirit beats her mortal bars,

As down dark tides the glory slides,

And starlike mingles with the stars.

When on my goodly charger borne

Through dreaming towns I go,

The cock crows ere the Christmas morn,

The streets are dumb with snow.

The tempest crackles on the leads,

And, ringing, spins from brand and mail;

20

But o'er the dark a glory spreads,

And gilds the driving hail.

I leave the plain, I climb the height;

No branchy thicket shelter yields;

But blessed forms in whistling storms

Fly o'er waste fens and windy fields.

A maiden knight—to me is given

Such hope, I know not fear;

I yearn to breathe the airs of heaven

That often meet me here.

30

I muse on joy that will not cease,

Pure spaces clothed in living beams,

Pure lilies of eternal peace,

Whose odours haunt my dreams;

And, stricken by an angel's hand,

This mortal armour that I wear,

This weight and size, this heart and eyes,

Are touch'd, are turn'd to finest air.

The clouds are broken in the sky,
 And through the mountain walls
 A rolling organ-harmony
 Swells up, and shakes and falls.
 Then move the trees, the copses nod,
 Wings flutter, voices hover clear:
 "O just and faithful knight of God!
 Ride on! the prize is near."
 So pass I hostel, hall, and grange;
 By bridge and ford, by park and pale,
 All-arm'd I ride, whate'er betide,
 Until I find the holy Grail.

10

YOU ASK ME WHY, THOUGH ILL AT EASE

You ask me why, though ill at ease,
 Within this region I subsist,
 Whose spirits falter in the mist,
 And languish for the purple seas?

It is the land that freemen till,
 That sober-suited Freedom chose,
 The land, where girt with friends or foes
 A man may speak the thing he will;

20

A land of settled government,
 A land of just and old renown,
 Where Freedom slowly broadens down
 From precedent to precedent:

Where faction seldom gathers head,
 But by degrees to fullness wrought,
 The strength of some diffusive thought
 Hath time and space to work and spread.

Should banded unions persecute
 Opinion, and induce a time
 When single thought is civil crime,
 And individual freedom mute;

30

Though Power should make from land to land
 The name of Britain trebly great—

Though every channel of the State
Should almost choke with golden sand—

Yet waft me from the harbour-mouth,
Wild wind! I seek a warmer sky,
And I will see before I die
The palms and temples of the South.

OF OLD SAT FREEDOM ON THE HEIGHTS

Of old sat Freedom on the heights,
The thunders breaking at her feet:
Above her shook the starry lights:
She heard the torrents meet.

10

There in her place she did rejoice,
Self-gather'd in her prophet-mind;
But fragments of her mighty voice
Came rolling on the wind.

Then stept she down through town and field
To mingle with the human race,
And part by part to men reveal'd
The fullness of her face—

Grave mother of majestic works,
From her isle-altar gazing down,
Who, God-like, grasps the triple forks,
And, King-like, wears the crown:

20

Her open eyes desire the truth.
The wisdom of a thousand years
Is in them. May perpetual youth
Keep dry their light from tears;

That her fair form may stand and shine,
Make bright our days and light our dreams,
Turning to scorn with lips divine
The falsehood of extremes!

30

LOVE THOU THY LAND, WITH LOVE
FAR-BROUGHT

Love thou thy land, with love far-brought
From out the storied Past, and used
Within the Present, but transfused
Through future time by power of thought.

True love turn'd round on fixed poles,
Love that endures not sordid ends,
For English natures, freemen, friends,
Thy brothers and immortal souls.

But pamper not a hasty time,
Nor feed with crude imaginings
The herd, wild hearts and feeble wings
That every sophister can lime.

10

Deliver not the tasks of might
To weakness, neither hide the ray
From those, not blind, who wait for day,
Though sitting girt with doubtful light.

Make knowledge circle with the winds;
But let her herald, Reverence, fly
Before her to whatever sky
Bear seed of men and growth of minds.

20

Watch what main-currents draw the years:
Cut Prejudice against the grain:
But gentle words are always gain:
Regard the weakness of thy peers:

Nor toil for title, place, or touch
Of pension, neither count on praise:
It grows to guerdon after-days:
Nor deal in watchwords overmuch;

Not clinging to some ancient saw;
Not master'd by some modern term;

30

Not swift nor slow to change, but firm:
And in its season bring the law;

That from Discussion's lip may fall
With Life, that, working strongly, binds—
Set in all lights by many minds,
To close the interests of all.

For Nature also, cold and warm,
And moist and dry, devising long,
Through many agents making strong,
Matures the individual form.

10

Meet is it changes should control
Our being, lest we rust in ease.
We all are changed by still degrees,
All but the basis of the soul.

So let the change which comes be free
To ingroove itself with that which flies,
And work, a joint of state, that plies
Its office, moved with sympathy.

A saying, hard to shape in act;
For all the past of Time reveals
A bridal dawn of thunder-peals,
Wherever Thought hath wedded Fact.

20

Ev'n now we hear with inward strife
A motion toiling in the gloom—
The Spirit of the years to come
Yearning to mix himself with Life.

A slow-develop'd strength awaits
Completion in a painful school;
Phantoms of other forms of rule,
New Majesties of mighty States—

30

The warders of the growing hour,
But vague in vapour, hard to mark;

And round them sea and air are dark
With great contrivances of Power.

Of many changes, aptly join'd,
Is bodied forth the second whole.
Regard gradation, lest the soul
Of Discord race the rising wind;

A wind to puff your idol-fires,
And heap their ashes on the head;
To shame the boast so often made.
That we are wiser than our sires.

10

Oh yet, if Nature's evil star
Drive men in manhood, as in youth,
To follow flying steps of Truth
Across the brazen bridge of war—

If New and Old, disastrous feud,
Must ever shock, like armed foes,
And this be true, till Time shall close,
That Principles are rain'd in blood;

Not yet the wise of heart would cease
To hold his hope through shame and guilt,
But with his hand against the hilt,
Would pace the troubled land, like Peace;

20

Not less, though dogs of Faction bay,
Would serve his kind in deed and word,
Certain, if knowledge bring the sword,
That knowledge takes the sword away—

Would love the gleams of good that broke
From either side, nor veil his eyes:
And if some dreadful need should rise
Would strike, and firmly, and one stroke:

30

To-morrow yet would reap to-day,
As we bear blossom of the dead;
Earn well the thrifty months, nor wed
Raw Haste, half-sister to Delay.

ST. SIMEON STYLITES

Although I be the basest of mankind,
From scalp to sole one slough and crust of sin,
Unfit for earth, unfit for heaven, scarce meet
For troops of devils, mad with blasphemy,
I will not cease to grasp the hope I hold
Of saintdom, and to clamour, mourn, and sob,
Battering the gates of heaven with storms of prayer,
Have mercy, Lord, and take away my sin!

Let this avail, just, dreadful, mighty God,
This not be all in vain, that thrice ten years, 10
Thrice multiplied by superhuman pangs,
In hungers and in thirsts, fevers and cold,
In coughs, aches, stitches, ulcerous throes and
cramps,

A sign betwixt the meadow and the cloud,
Patient on this tall pillar I have borne
Rain, wind, frost, heat, hail, damp, and sleet, and
snow;

And I had hoped that ere this period closed
Thou wouldst have caught me up into thy rest,
Denying not these weather-beaten limbs
The meed of saints, the white robe and the palm. 20

O take the meaning, Lord: I do not breathe,
Not whisper, any murmur of complaint.
Pain heap'd ten hundred-fold to this, were still
Less burthen, by ten hundred-fold, to bear,
Than were those lead-like tons of sin, that crush'd
My spirit flat before thee.

O Lord, Lord,
Thou knowest I bore this better at the first,
For I was strong and hale of body then;
And though my teeth, which now are dropt away,
Would chatter with the cold, and all my beard 30
Was tagg'd with icy fringes in the moon,
I drown'd the whoopings of the owl with sound
Of pious hymns and psalms, and sometimes saw
An angel stand and watch me, as I sang.
Now I am feeble grown; my end draws nigh—
I hope my end draws nigh: half deaf I am,

So that I scarce can hear the people hum
 About the column's base, and almost blind,
 And scarce can recognize the fields I know;
 And both my thighs are rotted with the dew;
 Yet cease I not to clamour and to cry,
 While my stiff spine can hold my weary head,
 Till all my limbs drop piecemeal from the stone,
 Have mercy, mercy! take away my sin.

O Jesus, if thou wilt not save my soul,
 Who may be saved? who is it may be saved?
 Who may be made a saint, if I fail here?
 Show me the man hath suffer'd more than I.
 For did not all thy martyrs die one death?
 For either they were stoned, or crucified,
 Or burn'd in fire, or boil'd in oil, or sawn
 In twain beneath the ribs; but I die here
 To-day, and whole years long, a life of death.
 Bear witness, if I could have found a way
 (And heedfully I sifted all my thought)
 More slowly-painful to subdue this home
 Of sin, my flesh, which I despise and hate,
 I had not stinted practice, O my God.

For not alone this pillar-punishment,
 Not this alone I bore: but while I lived
 In the white convent down the valley there,
 For many weeks about my loins I wore
 The rope that haled the buckets from the well,
 Twisted as tight as I could knot the noose;
 And spake not of it to a single soul,
 Until the ulcer, eating through my skin,
 Betray'd my secret penance, so that all
 My brethren marvell'd greatly. More than this
 I bore, whereof, O God, thou knowest all.

Three winters, that my soul might grow to thee,
 I lived up there on yonder mountain side.
 My right leg chain'd into the crag, I lay
 Pent in a roofless close of ragged stones;
 Inswathed sometimes in wandering mist, and twice
 Black'd with thy branding thunder, and sometimes
 Sucking the damps for drink, and eating not,
 Except the spare chance-gift of those that came
 To touch my body and be heal'd, and live:

And they say then that I work'd miracles,
Whereof my fame is loud amongst mankind,
Cured lameness, palsies, cancers. Thou, O God,
Knowest alone whether this was or no.
Have mercy, mercy! cover all my sin.

Then, that I might be more alone with thee,
Three years I lived upon a pillar, high
Six cubits, and three years on one of twelve;
And twice three years I crouch'd on one that rose
Twenty by measure; last of all, I grew 10
Twice ten long weary weary years to this,
That numbers forty cubits from the soil.

I think that I have borne as much as this—
Or else I dream—and for so long a time,
If I may measure time by yon slow light,
And this high dial which my sorrow crowns—
So much—even so.

And yet I know not well,
For that the evil ones come here, and say,
“Fall down, O Simeon: thou hast suffer'd long
For ages and for ages!” then they prate 20
Of penances I cannot have gone through,
Perplexing me with lies: and oft I fall,
Maybe for months, in such blind lethargies,
That Heaven, and Earth, and Time are choked.

But yet

Bethink thee, Lord, while thou and all the saints
Enjoy themselves in heaven, and men on earth
House in the shade of comfortable roofs,
Sit with their wives by fires, eat wholesome food,
And wear warm clothes, and even beasts have stalls,
I, 'tween the spring and downfall of the light, 30
Bow down one thousand and two hundred times,
To Christ, the Virgin Mother, and the saints;
Or in the night, after a little sleep,
I wake: the chill stars sparkle; I am wet
With drenching dews, or stiff with crackling frost.
I wear an undress'd goatskin on my back;
A grazing iron collar grinds my neck;
And in my weak, lean arms I lift the cross,
And strive and wrestle with thee till I die:
O mercy, mercy! wash away my sin. 40

O Lord, thou knowest what a man I am;
 A sinful man, conceived and born in sin:
 'Tis their own doing; this is none of mine;
 Lay it not to me. Am I to blame for this,
 That here come those that worship me? Ha! ha!
 They think that I am somewhat. What am I?
 The silly people take me for a saint,
 And bring me offerings of fruit and flowers:
 And I, in truth (thou wilt bear witness here)
 Have all in all endured as much and more
 Than many just and holy men, whose names
 Are register'd and calendar'd for saints.

10

Good people, you do ill to kneel to me.
 What is it I can have done to merit this?
 I am a sinner viler than you all.
 It may be I have wrought some miracles,
 And cured some halt and maim'd; but what of that?
 It may be, no one, even among the saints,
 May match his pains with mine; but what of that?
 Yet do not rise: for you may look on me,
 And in your looking you may kneel to God.
 Speak! is there any of you halt or maim'd?
 I think you know I have some power with Heaven
 From my long penance: let him speak his wish.

20

Yes, I can heal him. Power goes forth from me.
 They say that they are heal'd. Ah, hark! they
 shout,

"St. Simeon Stylites." Why, if so,
 God reaps a harvest in me. O my soul,
 God reaps a harvest in thee. If this be,
 Can I work miracles and not be saved?
 This is not told of any. They were saints.
 It cannot be but that I shall be saved;
 Yea, crown'd a saint. They shout, "Behold a saint!"
 And lower voices saint me from above.
 Courage, St. Simeon! This dull chrysalis
 Cracks into shining wings, and hope ere death
 Spreads more and more and more, that God hath
 now

30

Sponged and made blank of crimeful record all
 My mortal archives.

O my sons, my sons,

I, Simeon of the pillar, my surname
Stylites, among men; I, Simeon,
The watcher on the column till the end;
I, Simeon, whose brain the sunshine bakes;
I, whose bald brows in silent hours become
Unnaturally hoar with rime, do now
From my high nest of penance here proclaim
That Pontius and Iscariot by my side
Show'd like fair seraphs. On the coals I lay,
A vessel full of sin: all hell beneath
Made me boil over. Devils pluck'd my sleeve;
Abaddon and Asmodeus caught at me.
I smote them with the cross; they swarm'd again.
In bed like monstrous apes they crush'd my chest:
They flapp'd my light out as I read: I saw
Their faces grow between me and my book:
With colt-like whinny and with hoggish whine
They burst my prayer. Yet this way was left,
And by this way I 'scaped them. Mortify
Your flesh, like me, with scourges and with thorns; 20
Smite, shrink not, spare not. If it may be, fast
Whole Lents, and pray. I hardly, with slow steps,
With slow, faint steps, and much exceeding pain,
Have scrambled past those pits of fire, that still
Sing in mine ears. But yield not me the praise:
God only through his bounty hath thought fit,
Among the powers and princes of this world,
To make me an example to mankind,
Which few can reach to. Yet I do not say
But that a time may come—yea, even now, 30
Now, now, his footsteps smite the threshold stairs
Of life—I say, that time is at the doors
When you may worship me without reproach;
For I will leave my relics in your land,
And you may carve a shrine about my dust,
And burn a fragrant lamp before my bones,
When I am gather'd to the glorious saints.

While I spake then, a sting of shrewdest pain
Ran shrivelling through me, and a clouddlike change,
In passing, with a grosser film made thick 40
These heavy, horny eyes. The end! the end!
Surely the end! What's here? a shape, a shade,

A flash of light. Is that the angel there
 That holds a crown? Come, blessed brother, come!
 I know thy glittering face. I waited long;
 My brows are ready. What! deny it now?
 Nay, draw, draw, draw nigh. So I clutch it. Christ!
 'Tis gone! 'tis here again; the crown! the crown!
 So now 'tis fitted on and grows to me,
 And from it melt the dews of Paradise,
 Sweet! sweet! spikenard, and balm, and frankin-
 cense.

Ah! let me not be fool'd, sweet saints: I trust 10
 That I am whole, and clean, and meet for Heaven.

Speak, if there be a priest, a man of God,
 Among you there, and let him presently
 Approach, and lean a ladder on the shaft.
 And climbing up into my airy home,
 Deliver me the blessed sacrament;
 For by the warning of the Holy Ghost,
 I prophesy that I shall die to-night,
 A quarter before twelve.

But thou, O Lord,
 Aid all this foolish people; let them take 20
 Example, pattern: lead them to thy light.

THE TALKING OAK

Once more the gate behind me falls;
 Once more before my face
 I see the moulder'd Abbey-walls,
 That stand within the chace.

Beyond the lodge the city lies,
 Beneath its drift of smoke;
 And ah! with what delighted eyes
 I turn to yonder oak.

For when my passion first began,
 Ere that, which in me burn'd,
 The love, that makes me thrice a man,
 Could hope itself return'd;

To yonder oak within the field
I spoke without restraint,
And with a larger faith appealed
Than Papist unto saint.

For oft I talk'd with him apart,
And told him of my choice,
Until he plagiarized a heart,
And answer'd with a voice.

Though what he whispered, under Heaven
None else could understand;
I found him garrulously given,
A babbler in the land.

10

But since I heard him make reply
Is many a weary hour;
'Twere well to question him, and try
If yet he keeps the power.

Hail, hidden to the knees in fern,
Broad Oak of Sumner-chace,
Whose topmost branches can discern
The roofs of Sumner-place!

20

Say thou, whereon I carved her name,
If ever maid or spouse,
As fair as my Olivia, came
To rest beneath thy boughs.—

“O Walter, I have shelter'd here
Whatever maiden grace
The good old summers, year by year,
Made ripe in Sumner-chace:

“Old summers, when the monk was fat,
And, issuing shorn and sleek,
Would twist his girdle tight, and pat
The girls upon the cheek,

30

“Ere yet, in scorn of Peter's-pence,
And number'd bead, and shrift,

Bluff Harry broke into the spence,
And turn'd the cowl's adrift:

"And I have seen some score of those
Fresh faces, that would thrive
When his man-minded offset rose
To chase the deer at five;

"And all that from the town would stroll,
Till that wild wind made work
In which the gloomy brewer's soul
Went by me, like a stork:

10

"The slight she-slips of loyal blood,
And others, passing praise,
Strait-laced, but all-too-full in bud
For puritanic stays:

"And I have shadow'd many a group
Of beauties, that were born
In teacup-times of hood and hoop,
Or while the patch was worn;

"And, leg and arm with love-knots gay,
About me leap'd and laugh'd
The modish Cupid of the day,
And shrill'd his tinsel shaft.

20

"I swear (and else may insects prick
Each leaf into a gall)
This girl, for whom your heart is sick,
Is three times worth them all;

"For those and theirs, by Nature's law,
Have faded long ago;
But in these latter springs I saw
Your own Olivia blow,

30

"From when she gamboll'd on the greens,
A baby-germ, to when
The maiden blossoms of her teens
Could number five from ten.

"I swear, by leaf, and wind, and rain
(And hear me with thine ears),
That, though I circle in the grain
Five hundred rings of years—

"Yet, since I first could cast a shade,
Did never creature pass
So slightly, musically made,
So light upon the grass:

"For as to fairies, that will flit
To make the greensward fresh,
I hold them exquisitely knit,
But far too spare of flesh." 10

Oh, hide thy knotted knees in fern,
And overlook the chace;
And from thy topmost branch discern
The roofs of Sumner-place.

But thou, whereon I carved her name,
That oft hast heard my vows,
Declare when last Olivia came
To sport beneath thy boughs. 20

"O yesterday, you know, the fair
Was holden at the town;
Her father left his good arm-chair,
And rode his hunter down.

"And with him Albert came on his.
I look'd at him with joy:
As cowslip unto oxlip is,
So seems she to the boy.

"An hour had pass'd—and, sitting straight
Within the low-wheel'd chaise,
Her mother trundled to the gate
Behind the dappled grays. 30

"But, as for her, she stay'd at home,
And on the roof she went,

And down the way you use to come,
She look'd with discontent.

"She left the novel half-uncut
Upon the rosewood shelf;
She left the new piano shut:
She could not please herself.

"Then ran she, gamesome as the colt,
And livelier than a lark
She sent her voice through all the holt
Before her, and the park.

10

"A light wind chased her on the wing,
And in the chase grew wild,
As close as might be would he cling
About the darling child:

"But light as any wind that blows
So fleetly did she stir;
The flower she touch'd on dipt and rose,
And turn'd to look at her.

"And here she came, and round me play'd
And sang to me the whole
Of those three stanzas that you made
About my 'giant bole',

20

"And in a fit of frolic mirth
She strove to span my waist:
Alas, I was so broad of girth,
I could not be embraced.

"I wish'd myself the fair young beech
That here beside me stands,
That round me, clasping each in each,
She might have lock'd her hands.

30

"Yet seem'd the pressure thrice as sweet
As woodbine's fragile hold,
Or when I feel about my feet
The berried briony fold."

O muffle round thy knees with fern,
And shadow Sumner-chace!
Long may thy topmost branch discern
The roofs of Sumner-place!

But tell me, did she read the name
I carved with many vows
When last with throbbing heart I came
To rest beneath thy boughs?

"Oh yes, she wander'd round and round
These knotted knees of mine,
And found, and kiss'd the name she found,
And sweetly murmur'd thine. 10

"A tear-drop trembled from its source,
And down my surface crept.
My sense of touch is something coarse,
But I believe she wept.

"Then flush'd her cheek with rosy light,
She glanced across the plain;
But not a creature was in sight:
She kiss'd me once again. 20

"Her kisses were so close and kind,
That, trust me on my word,
Hard wood I am, and wrinkled rind,
But yet my sap was stirr'd;

"And even into my inmost ring
A pleasure I discern'd,
Like those blind motions of the spring,
That show the year is turn'd.

"Thrice-happy he that may caress
The ringlet's waving balm— 30
The cushions of whose touch may press
The maiden's tender palm.

"I, rooted here among the groves,
But languidly adjust

My vapid vegetable loves
With anthers and with dust:

"For ah! my friend, the days were brief
Whereof the poets talk,
When that, which breathes within the leaf,
Could slip its bark and walk.

"But could I, as in times foregone,
From spray, and branch, and stem,
Have suck'd and gather'd into one
The life that spreads in them,

10

"She had not found me so remiss;
But lightly issuing through,
I would have paid her kiss for kiss
With usury thereto."

O flourish high, with leafy towers,
And overlook the lea,
Pursue thy loves among the bowers,
But leave thou mine to me.

O flourish, hidden deep in fern,
Old oak, I love thee well;
A thousand thanks for what I learn,
And what remains to tell.

20

"'Tis little more: the day was warm;
At last, tired out with play,
She sank her head upon her arm,
And at my feet she lay.

"Her eyelids dropp'd their silken eaves.
I breathed upon her eyes
Through all the summer of my leaves
A welcome mix'd with sighs.

30

"I took the swarming sound of life—
The music from the town—
The murmurs of the drum and fife,
And lull'd them in my own.

"Sometimes I let a sunbeam slip,
To light her shaded eye;
A second flutter'd round her lip
Like a golden butterfly;

"A third would glimmer on her neck
To make the necklace shine;
Another slid, a sunny fleck,
From head to ankle fine.

"Then close and dark my arms I spread,
And shadow'd all her rest—
Dropt dews upon her golden head,
An acorn in her breast.

10

"But in a pet she started up,
And pluck'd it out, and drew
My little oakling from the cup,
And flung him in the dew.

"And yet it was a graceful gift—
I felt a pang within
As when I see the woodman lift
His axe to slay my kin.

20

"I shook him down because he was
The finest on the tree.
He lies beside thee on the grass—
O kiss him once for me!

"O kiss him twice and thrice for me,
That have no lips to kiss;
For never yet was oak on lea
Shall grow so fair as this."

Step deeper yet in herb and fern,
Look further through the chace,
Spread upward till thy boughs discern
The front of Sumner-place.

30

This fruit of thine by Love is blest
That but a moment lay

Where fairer fruit of Love may rest
Some happy future day.

I kiss it twice, I kiss it thrice.
The warmth it thence shall win
To riper life may magnetize
The baby-oak within.

But thou, while kingdoms overset,
Or lapse from hand to hand,
Thy leaf shall never fail, nor yet
Thine acorn in the land.

10

May never saw dismember thee,
Nor wielded axe disjoint,
That art the fairest-spoken tree
From here to Lizard-point.

O rock upon thy towery top
All throats that gurgle sweet!
All starry culmination drop
Balm-dews to bathe thy feet!

All grass of silky feather grow—
And while he sinks or swells
The full south-breeze around thee blow
The sound of minster bells.

20

The fat earth feed thy branchy root,
That under deeply strikes!
The northern morning o'er thee shoot,
High up, in silver spikes!

Nor ever lightning char thy grain,
But, rolling as in sleep,
Low thunders bring the mellow rain,
That makes thee broad and deep!

30

And hear me swear a solemn oath,
That only by thy side
Will I to Olive plight my troth,
And gain her for my bride.

And when my marriage morn may fall
 She, Dryad-like, shall wear
 Alternate leaf and acorn-ball
 In wreath about her hair.

And I will work in prose and rhyme,
 And praise thee more in both
 Than bard has honour'd beech or lime,
 Or that Thessalian growth,

In which the swarthy ringdove sat,
 And mystic sentence spoke;
 And more than England honours that,
 Thy famous brother-oak,

10

Wherein the younger Charles abode
 Till all the paths were dim,
 And far below the Roundhead rode,
 And humm'd a surly hymn.

ULYSSES

It little profits that an idle king,
 By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
 Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
 Unequal laws unto a savage race,
 That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
 I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
 Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy'd
 Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
 That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
 Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
 Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
 For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known; cities of men
 And manners, climates, councils, governments,
 Myself not least but honour'd of them all;
 And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
 Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
 I am a part of all that I have met;
 Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough
 Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades

20

30

For ever and for ever when I move.
 How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
 To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
 As though to breathe were life. Life piled on life
 Were all too little, and of one to me
 Little remains: but every hour is saved
 From that eternal silence, something more,
 A bringer of new things; and vile it were
 For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
 And this gray spirit yearning in desire
 To follow knowledge, like a sinking star,
 Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

10

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
 To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—
 Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
 This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
 A rugged people, and through soft degrees
 Subdue them to the useful and the good.
 Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
 Of common duties, decent not to fail
 In offices of tenderness, and pay
 Meet adoration to my household gods,
 When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

20

There lies the port: the vessel puffs her sail:
 There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,
 Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought
 with me—

That ever with a frolic welcome took
 The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
 Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
 Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
 Death closes all: but something ere the end,
 Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
 Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
 The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
 The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the
 deep

30

Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
 Push off, and sitting well in order smite
 The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
 To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths

40

the line of the sea

LOCKSLEY HALL

Of all the western stars until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

10

LOCKSLEY HALL

Comrades, leave me here a little, while as yet 'tis
early morn;
Leave me here, and when you want me, sound upon
the bugle-horn.

'Tis the place, and all around it, as of old, the cur-
lews call,
Dreary gleams about the moorland flying over Locks-
ley Hall;

Locksley Hall, that in the distance overlooks the
sandy tracts,
And the hollow ocean-ridges roaring into cataracts.

Many a night from yonder ivied casement, ere I
went to rest,
Did I look on great Orion sloping slowly to the
West.

Many a night I saw the Pleiads, rising through the
mellow shade,
Glitter like a swarm of fire-flies tangled in a silver 20
braid.

Here about the beach I wander'd, nourishing a youth
sublime
With the fairy tales of science, and the long result
of Time;

When the centuries behind me like a fruitful land
reposed;

When I clung to all the present for the promise that
it closed:

When I dipt into the future far as human eye could
see;

Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder
that would be ——

In the spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin's
breast;

In the spring the wanton lapwing gets himself an-
other crest;

In the spring a livelier iris changes on the burnish'd
dove;

In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to
thoughts of love.

Then her cheek was pale and thinner than should be
for one so young,

And her eyes on all my motions with a mute observ- 10
ance hung.

And I said, "My cousin Amy, speak, and speak the
truth to me,

Trust me, cousin, all the current of my being sets to
thee."

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a colour and
a light,

As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the northern
night.

And she turn'd—her bosom shaken with a sudden
storm of sighs—

All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark of hazel
eyes—

Saying, "I have hid my feelings, fearing they should
do me wrong;"

Saying, "Dost thou love me, cousin?" weeping, "I
have loved thee long."

Love took up the glass of Time, and turn'd it in his
glowing hands:

Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden
sands.

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the
chords with might;

Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, pass'd in
music out of sight.

Many a morning on the moorland did we hear the
copses ring,

And her whisper throng'd my pulses with the full-
ness of the spring.

Many an evening by the waters did we watch the
stately ships,

And our spirits rush'd together at the touching of
the lips.

O my cousin, shallow-hearted! O my Amy, mine 10
no more!

O the dreary, dreary moorland! O the barren, bar-
ren shore!

Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than all songs
have sung,

Puppet to a father's threat, and servile to a shrewish
tongue!

Is it well to wish thee happy? having known me—
to decline

On a range of lower feelings and a narrower heart
than mine!

Yet it shall be: thou shalt lower to his level day by
day,

What is fine within thee growing coarse to sympa-
thize with clay.

As the husband is, the wife is: thou art mated with
a clown,
And the grossness of his nature will have weight to
drag thee down.

He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent
its novel force,
Something better than his dog, a little dearer than
his horse.

What is this? his eyes are heavy: think not they are
glazed with wine.
Go to him: it is thy duty: kiss him: take his hand
in thine.

It may be my lord is weary, that his brain is over-
wrought:
Soothe him with thy finer fancies, touch him with
thy lighter thought.

He will answer to the purpose, easy things to under-
stand—
Better thou wert dead before me, though I slew thee 10
with my hand!—

Better thou and I were lying, hidden from the heart's
disgrace,
Roll'd in one another's arms, and silent in a last
embrace.

Cursed be the social wants that sin against the
strength of youth!
Cursed be the social lies that warp us from the liv-
ing truth!

Cursed be the sickly forms that err from honest
Nature's rule!
Cursed be the gold that gilds the straiten'd forehead
of the fool!

Well—'tis well that I should bluster!—Hadst thou
less unworthy proved—

Would to God—for I had loved thee more than ever
wife was loved.

Am I mad, that I should cherish that which bears but
bitter fruit?

I will pluck it from my bosom, though my heart be
at the root.

Never, though my mortal summers to such length of
years should come

As the many winter'd crow that leads the clanging
rookery home.

Where is comfort? in division of the records of the
mind?

Can I part her from herself, and love her, as I knew
her, kind?

I remember one that perish'd: sweetly did she speak
and move:

Such a one do I remember, whom to look at was
to love.

Can I think of her as dead, and love her for the 10
love she bore?

No—she never loved me truly: love is love for ever-
more.

Comfort? comfort scorn'd of devils! this is truth the
poet sings,

That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering
happier things.

Drug thy memories, lest thou learn it, lest thy heart
be put to proof,

In the dead unhappy night, and when the rain is on
the roof.

Like a dog, he hunts in dreams, and thou art staring
at the wall,

Where the dying night-lamp flickers, and the shad-
ows rise and fall.

Then a hand shall pass before thee, pointing to his
drunken sleep,
To thy widow'd marriage-pillows, to the tears that
thou wilt weep.

Thou shalt hear the "Never, never," whisper'd by
the phantom years,
And a song from out the distance in the ringing of
thine ears;

And an eye shall vex thee, looking ancient kindness
on thy pain.
Turn thee, turn thee on thy pillow: get thee to thy
rest again.

Nay, but Nature brings thee solace; for a tender
voice will cry.
'Tis a purer life than thine; a lip to drain thy trouble
dry.

Baby lips will laugh me down: my latest rival brings
thee rest.
Baby fingers, waxen touches, press me from the 10
mother's breast.

Oh, the child too clothes the father with a dearness
not his due.
Half is thine and half is his: it will be worthy of
the two.

Oh, I see thee old and formal, fitted to thy petty
part,
With a little hoard of maxims preaching down a
daughter's heart.

"They were dangerous guides the feelings—she her-
self was not exempt—
Truly, she herself had suffer'd"—Perish in thy self-
contempt!

Overlive it—lower yet—be happy! wherefore should
I care?

I myself must mix with action, lest I wither by
despair.

What is that which I should turn to, lighting upon
days like these?

Every door is barr'd with gold, and opens but to
golden keys.

Every gate is throng'd with suitors, all the markets
overflow.

I have but an angry fancy: what is that which I
should do?

I had been content to perish, falling on the foe-
man's ground,

When the ranks are roll'd in vapour, and the winds
are laid with sound.

But the jingling of the guinea helps the hurt that
Honour feels,

And the nations do but murmur, snarling at each
other's heels.

Can I but relive in sadness? I will turn that earlier 10
page.

Hide me from my deep emotion, O thou wondrous
Mother-Age!

Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt before
the strife,

When I heard my days before me, and the tumult
of my life;

Yearning for the large excitement that the coming
years would yield,

Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his
father's field,

And at night along the dusky highway near and
nearer drawn,

Sees in heaven the light of London flaring like a
dreary dawn;

And his spirit leaps within him to be gone before
him then,
Underneath the light he looks at, in among the
throngs of men:

Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping
something new:
That which they have done but earnest of the things
that they shall do:

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could
see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder
that would be;

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of
magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with
costly bales;

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rain'd
a ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the cen- 10
tral blue;

Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-wind
rushing warm,
With the standards of the peoples, plunging through
the thunder-storm;

Till the war-drum throb'd no longer, and the bat-
tle-flags were furl'd
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the
world.

There the common sense of most shall hold a fretful
realm in awe,
And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in uni-
versal law.

So I triumph'd, ere my passion sweeping through
me left me dry,

Left me with the palsied heart, and left me with
the jaundiced eye;

Eye, to which all order festers, all things here are
out of joint,
Science moves, but slowly slowly, creeping on from
point to point:

Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion, creeping
nigher,
Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly-
dying fire.

Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing
purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the
process of the suns.

What is that to him that reaps not harvest of his
youthful joys,
Though the deep heart of existence beat for ever
like a boy's?

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and I linger 10
on the shore,
And the individual withers, and the world is more
and more,

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and he bears
a laden breast,
Full of sad experience, moving toward the stillness
of his rest.

Hark, my merry comrades call me, sounding on the
bugle-horn,
They to whom my foolish passion were a target for
their scorn:

Shall it not be scorn to me to harp on such a moul-
der'd string?
I am shamed through all my nature to have loved
so slight a thing.

Weakness to be wroth with weakness! woman's
pleasure, woman's pain—
Nature made them blinder motions bounded in a
shallower brain:

Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions,
match'd with mine,
Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto
wine—

Here at least, where nature sickens, nothing. Ah,
for some retreat
Deep in yonder shining Orient, where my life began
to beat;

Where in wild Mahratta-battle fell my father evil-
starr'd;
I was left a trampled orphan, and a selfish uncle's
ward.

Or to burst all links of habit—there to wander far
away,
On from island unto island at the gateways of the 10
day.

Larger constellations burning, mellow moons and
happy skies,
Breadths of tropic shade and palms in cluster, knots
of Paradise.

Never comes the trader, never floats an European
flag.
Slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland, swings the
trailer from the crag;

Droops the heavy-blossom'd bower, hangs the heavy-
fruited tree—
Summer isles of Eden lying in dark-purple spheres
of sea.

There methinks would be enjoyment more than in
this march of mind,

In the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts
that shake mankind.

There the passions cramp'd no longer shall have
scope and breathing-space;

I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my
dusky race.

Iron-jointed, supple-sinew'd, they shall dive, and
they shall run,

Catch the wild goat by the hair, and hurl their lances
in the sun;

Whistle back the parrot's call, and leap the rainbows
of the brooks,

Not with blinded eyesight poring over miserable
books—

Fool, again the dream, the fancy! but I *know* my
words are wild,

But I count the gray barbarian lower than the Chris-
tian child.

I, to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our 10
glorious gains,

Like a beast with lower pleasures, like a beast with
lower pains!

Mated with a squalid savage—what to me were sun
or clime?

I the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of
time—

I that rather held it better men should perish one
by one,

Than that earth should stand at gaze like Joshua's
moon in Ajalon!

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward
let us range.

Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing
grooves of change.

Through the shadow of the globe we sweep into the
younger day:

. Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.

Mother-Age (for mine I knew not) help me as
when life begun:

Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the light-
nings, weigh the Sun—

Oh, I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath not
set.

Ancient founts of inspiration well through all my
fancy yet.

Howsoever these things be, a long farewell to Locks-
ley Hall!

Now for me the woods may wither, now for me the
roof-tree fall.

Comes a vapour from the margin, blackening over
heath and holt,

Cramming all the blast before it, in its breast a thun- 10
derbolt.

Let it fall on Locksley Hall, with rain or hail, or
fire or snow;

For the mighty wind arises, roaring seaward, and
I go.

GODIVA

*I waited for the train at Coventry;
I hung with grooms and porters on the bridge,
To watch the three tall spires; and there I shaped
The city's ancient legend into this:—*

Not only we, the latest seed of Time,
New men, that in the flying of a wheel
Cry down the past, not only we, that prate
Of rights and wrongs, have loved the people well, 20
And loathed to see them overtax'd; but she
Did more, and underwent, and overcame,
The woman of a thousand summers back,

Godiva, wife to that grim Earl, who ruled
In Coventry: for when he laid a tax
Upon his town, and all the mothers brought
Their children, clamouring, "If we pay, we starve!"
She sought her lord, and found him, where he
strode

About the hall, among his dogs, alone,
His beard a foot before him, and his hair
A yard behind. She told him of their tears,
And pray'd him, "If they pay this tax, they starve."
Whereat he stared, replying, half-amazed, 10
"You would not let your little finger ache
For such as *these*?"—"But I would die," said she.
He laugh'd, and swore by Peter and by Paul:
Then fillip'd at the diamond in her ear—
"Oh, ay, ay, ay, you talk!"—"Alas!" she said,
"But prove me what it is I would not do."
And from a heart as rough as Esau's hand,
He answer'd, "Ride you naked through the town,
And I repeal it;" and nodding, as in scorn,
He parted, with great strides among his dogs. 20

So left alone, the passions of her mind,
As winds from all the compass shift and blow,
Made war upon each other for an hour,
Till pity won. She sent a herald forth,
And bade him cry, with sound of trumpet, all
The hard condition; but that she would loose
The people: therefore, as they loved her well,
From then till noon no foot should pace the street,
No eye look down, she passing; but that all
Should keep within, door shut, and window barr'd. 30

Then fled she to her inmost bower, and there
Unclasp'd the wedded eagles of her belt,
The grim Earl's gift; but ever at a breath
She linger'd, looking like a summer moon
Half-dipt in cloud: anon she shook her head,
And shower'd the rippled ringlets to her knee;
Unclad herself in haste; adown the stair
Stole on; and, like a creeping sunbeam, slid
From pillar unto pillar, until she reach'd
The gateway; there she found her palfrey trapt 40

In purple blazon'd with armorial gold.

Then she rode forth, clothed on with chastity.
 The deep air listen'd round her as she rode,
 And all the low wind hardly breathed for fear.
 The little wide-mouth'd heads upon the spout
 Had cunning eyes to see: the barking cur
 Made her cheek flame: her palfrey's footfall shot
 Light horrors through her pulses; the blind walls
 Were full of chinks and holes; and overhead
 Fantastic gables, crowding, stared: but she
 Not less through all bore up, till, last, she saw
 The white-flower'd elder-thicket from the field
 Gleam through the Gothic archways in the wall.

10

Then she rode back, clothed on with chastity.
 And one low churl, compact of thankless earth,
 The fatal byword of all years to come,
 Boring a little auger-hole in fear.
 Peep'd; but his eyes, before they had their will,
 Were shrivell'd into darkness in his head,
 And dropt before him. So the Powers, who wait
 On noble deeds, cancell'd a sense misused;
 And she, that knew not, pass'd; and all at once,
 With twelve great shocks of sound, the shameless
 noon
 Was clash'd and hammered from a hundred towers,
 One after one: but even then she gain'd
 Her bower; whence reissuing, robed and crown'd,
 To meet her lord, she took the tax away,
 And built herself an everlasting name.

Move eastward, happy earth, and leave

Yon orange sunset waning slow:

30

From fringes of the faded eve,

O happy planet, eastward go;

Till over thy dark shoulder glow

Thy silver sister-world, and rise

To glass herself in dewy eyes

That watch me from the glen below.

Ah, bear me with thee, smoothly borne,

Dip forward under starry light,

And move me to my marriage-morn,
And round again to happy night.

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

Oh well for the fisherman's boy
That he shouts with his sister at play!
Oh well for the sailor lad
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

10

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But oh for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

THE TWO VOICES

A still small voice spake unto me,
"Thou art so full of misery,
Were it not better not to be?"

20

Then to the still small voice I said,
"Let me not cast in endless shade
What is so wonderfully made."

To which the voice did urge reply:
"To-day I saw the dragon-fly
Come from the wells where he did lie.

"An inner impulse rent the veil
Of his old husk: from head to tail
Came out clear plates of sapphire mail.

30

"He dried his wings: like gauze they grew:
Through crofts and pastures wet with dew
A living flash of light he flew."

I said, "When first the world began,
Young Nature through five cycles ran,
And in the sixth she moulded man.

"She gave him mind, the lordliest
Proportion, and, above the rest,
Dominion in the head and breast."

Thereto the silent voice replied:
"Self-blinded are you by your pride.
Look up through night: the world is wide.

10

"This truth within thy mind rehearse,
That in a boundless universe
Is boundless better, boundless worse.

"Think you this mould of hopes and fears
Could find no statelier than his peers
In yonder hundred million spheres?"

It spake, moreover, in my mind:
"Though thou wert scatter'd to the wind,
Yet is there plenty of the kind."

20

Then did my response clearer fall:
"No compound of this earthly ball
Is like another, all in all."

To which he answer'd scoffingly:
"Good soul! suppose I grant it thee,
Who'll weep for thy deficiency?

"Or will one beam be less intense,
When thy peculiar difference
Is cancell'd in the world of sense?"

30

I would have said, "Thou canst not know."
But my full heart, that work'd below,
Rain'd through my sight its overflow.

Again the voice spake unto me:
"Thou art so steep'd in misery,
Surely 'twere better not to be.

"Thine anguish will not let thee sleep,
Nor any train of reason keep:
Thou canst not think, but thou wilt weep."

I said, "The years with change advance:
If I make dark my countenance,
I shut my life from happier chance.

"Some turn this sickness yet might take,
Ev'n yet." But he: "What drug can make
A wither'd palsy cease to shake?"

10

I wept, "Though I should die, I know
That all about the thorn will blow
In tufts of rosy-tinted snow;

"And men, through novel spheres of thought
Still moving after truth long sought,
Will learn new things when I am not."

"Yet," said the secret voice, "some time,
Sooner or later, will gray prime
Make thy grass hoar with early rime.

20

"Not less swift souls that yearn for light,
Rapt after heaven's starry flight,
Would sweep the tracts of day and night.

"Not less the bee would range her cells,
The furzy prickle fire the dells,
The foxglove cluster dappled bells."

I said that "all the years invent;
Each month is various to present
The world with some development.

30

"Were this not well, to bide mine hour
Though watching from a ruin'd tower
How grows the day of human power?"

"The highest-mounted mind," he said,
"Still sees the sacred morning spread
The silent summit overhead.

"Will thirty seasons render plain
Those lonely lights that still remain,
Just breaking over land and main?

"Or make that morn, from his cold crown
And crystal silence creeping down,
Flood with full daylight glebe and town?

"Forerun thy peers, thy time, and let
Thy feet, millenniums hence, be set
In midst of knowledge, dream'd not yet.

10

"Thou hast not gain'd a real height,
Nor art thou nearer to the light,
Because the scale is infinite.

"'Twere better not to breathe or speak,
Than cry for strength, remaining weak,
And seem to find, but still to seek.

"Moreover, but to seem to find
Asks what thou lackest, thought resign'd,
A healthy frame, a quiet mind."

20

I said, "When I am gone away,
'He dared not tarry,' men will say,
Doing dishonour to my clay."

"This is more vile," he made reply,
"To breathe and loathe, to live and sigh,
Than once from dread of pain to die.

"Sick art thou—a divided will
Still heaping on the fear of ill
The fear of men, a coward still.

30

"Do men love thee? Art thou so bound
To men that how thy name may sound
Will vex thee lying underground?

"The memory of the wither'd leaf
In endless time is scarce more brief
Than of the garner'd autumn-sheaf.

"Go, vexed Spirit, sleep in trust;
The right ear, that is fill'd with dust,
Hears little of the false or just."

"Hard task, to pluck resolve," I cried,
"From emptiness and the waste wide
Of that abyss, or scornful pride!

"Nay—rather yet that I could raise
One hope that warm'd me in the days
While still I yearn'd for human praise.

10

"When, wide in soul and bold of tongue,
Among the tents I paused and sung,
The distant battle flash'd and rung.

"I sung the joyful Pæan clear,
And, sitting, burnish'd without fear
The brand, the buckler, and the spear—

"Waiting to strive a happy strife,
To war with falsehood to the knife,
And not to lose the good of life—

20

"Some hidden principle to move,
To put together, part and prove,
And mete the bounds of hate and love—

"As far as might be, to carve out
Free space for every human doubt,
That the whole mind might orb about—

"To search through all I felt or saw,
The springs of life, the depths of awe,
And reach the law within the law:

30

"At least, not rotting like a weed,
But, having sown some generous seed,
Fruitful of further thought and deed,

"To pass, when Life her light withdraws,
Not void of righteous self-applause,
Nor in a merely selfish cause—

"In some good cause, not in mine own,
To perish, wept for, honour'd, known,
And like a warrior overthrown;

"Whose eyes are dim with glorious tears,
When, soil'd with noble dust, he hears
His country's war-song thrill his ears:

"Then dying of a mortal stroke, 10
What time the foeman's line is broke,
And all the war is roll'd in smoke."

"Yea!" said the voice, "thy dream was good,
While thou abodest in the bud.
It was the stirring of the blood.

"If Nature put not forth her power
About the opening of the flower,
Who is it that could live an hour?

"Then comes the check, the change, the fall.
Pain rises up, old pleasures pall. 20
There is one remedy for all.

"Yet hadst thou, through enduring pain,
Link'd month to month with such a chain
Of knitted purport, all were vain.

"Thou hadst not between death and birth
Dissolved the riddle of the earth.
So were thy labour little worth.

"That men with knowledge merely play'd,
I told thee—hardly nigher made,
Though scaling slow from grade to grade: 30

"Much less this dreamer, deaf and blind,
Named man, may hope some truth to find,
That bears relation to the mind.

"For every worm beneath the moon
Draws different threads, and late and soon
Spins, toiling out his own cocoon.

"Cry, faint not: either Truth is born
Beyond the polar gleam forlorn,
Or in the gateways of the morn.

"Cry, faint not, climb: the summits slope
Beyond the furthest flights of hope,
Wrapt in dense cloud from base to cope.

"Sometimes a little corner shines, 10
As over rainy mist inclines
A gleaming crag with belts of pines.

"I will go forward, sayest thou,
I shall not fail to find her now.
Look up, the fold is on her brow.

"If straight thy track, or if oblique,
Thou know'st not. Shadows thou dost strike,
Embracing cloud, Ixion-like;

"And owning but a little more
Than beasts, abidest lame and poor, 20
Calling thyself a little lower

"Than angels. Cease to wail and brawl!
Why inch by inch to darkness crawl?
There is one remedy for all."

"O dull, one-sided voice," said I,
"Wilt thou make everything a lie,
To flatter me that I may die?"

"I know that age to age succeeds,
Blowing a noise of tongues and deeds,
A dust of systems and of creeds. 30

"I cannot hide that some have striven,
Achieving calm, to whom was given
The joy that mixes man with Heaven:

"Who, rowing hard against the stream,
Saw distant gates of Eden gleam,
And did not dream it was a dream;

"But heard, by secret transport led,
Ev'n in the charnels of the dead,
The murmur of the fountain-head—

"Which did accomplish their desire,
Bore and forbore, and did not tire,
Like Stephen, an unquenched fire.

"He heedeth not reviling tones,
Nor sold his heart to idle moans,
Though curs'd and scorn'd, and bruis'd with stones: 10

"But looking upward, full of grace,
He pray'd, and from a happy place
God's glory smote him on the face."

The sullen answer slid betwixt:
"Not that the grounds of hope were fix'd,
The elements were kindlier mix'd."

I said, "I toil beneath the curse,
But, knowing not the universe,
I fear to slide from bad to worse. 20

"And that, in seeking to undo
One riddle, and to find the true,
I knit a hundred others new:

"Or that this anguish fleeting hence,
Unmanacled from bonds of sense,
Be fix'd and froz'n to permanence:

"For I go, weak from suffering here;
Naked I go, and void of cheer:
What is it that I may not fear?" 30

"Consider well," the voice replied,
"His face, that two hours since hath died:
Wilt thou find passion, pain or pride?

"Will he obey when one commands?
Or answer should one press his hands?
He answers not, nor understands.

"His palms are folded on his breast:
There is no other thing express'd
But long disquiet merged in rest.

"His lips are very mild and meek:
Though one should smite him on the cheek,
And on the mouth, he will not speak.

"His little daughter, whose sweet face
He kiss'd, taking his last embrace,
Becomes dishonour to her race; 10

"His sons grow up that bear his name,
Some grow to honour, some to shame,—
But he is chill to praise or blame.

"He will not hear the north wind rave,
Nor, moaning, household shelter crave
From winter rains that beat his grave.

"High up the vapours fold and swim:
About him broods the twilight dim:
The place he knew forgetteth him." 20

"If all be dark, vague voice," I said,
"These things are wrapt in doubt and dread,
Nor canst thou show the dead are dead.

"The sap dries up: the plant declines.
A deeper tale my heart divines.
Know I not Death? the outward signs?

"I found him when my years were few;
A shadow on the graves I knew,
And darkness in the village yew. 30

"From grave to grave the shadow crept:
In her still place the morning wept:
Touch'd by his feet the daisy slept.

"The simple senses crown'd his head :
'Omega! thou art Lord,' they said,
'We find no motion in the dead.'

"Why, if man rot in dreamless ease,
Should that plain fact, as taught by these,
Not make him sure that he shall cease?

"Who forged that other influence,
That heat of inward evidence,
By which he doubts against the sense?

"He owns the fatal gift of eyes,
That read his spirit blindly wise,
Not simple as a thing that dies.

10

"Here sits he shaping wings to fly:
His heart forebodes a mystery:
He names the name Eternity.

"That type of Perfect in his mind
In Nature can he nowhere find.
He sows himself on every wind.

"He seems to hear a Heavenly Friend,
And through thick veils to apprehend
A labour working to an end.

20

"The end and the beginning vex
His reason; many things perplex,
With motions, checks, and counter-checks.

"He knows a baseness in his blood
At such strange war with something good,
He may not do the thing he would.

"Heaven opens inward, chasms yawn,
Vast images in glimmering dawn,
Half shown, are broken and withdrawn.

30

"Ah! sure within him and without,
Could his dark wisdom find it out,
There must be answer to his doubt.

"But thou canst answer not again.
With thine own weapon art thou slain,
Or thou wilt answer but in vain.

"The doubt would rest, I dare not solve.
In the same circle we revolve.
Assurance only breeds resolve."

As when a billow, blown against,
Falls back, the voice with which I fenced
A little ceased, but recommenced:

"Where wert thou when thy father play'd 10
In his free field, and pastime made,
A merry boy in sun and shade?

"A merry boy they called him then.
He sat upon the knees of men
In days that never come again,

"Before the little ducts began
To feed thy bones with lime, and ran
Their course, till thou wert also man:

"Who took a wife, who rear'd his race,
Whose wrinkles gather'd on his face, 20
Whose troubles number with his days:

"A life of nothings, nothing-worth,
From that first nothing ere his birth
To that last nothing under earth!"

"These words," I said, "are like the rest;
No certain clearness, but at best
A vague suspicion of the breast:

"But if I grant, thou mightst defend
The thesis which thy words intend—
That to begin implies to end; 30

"Yet how should I for certain hold,
Because my memory is so cold,
That I first was in human mould?

"I cannot make this matter plain,
But I would shoot, howe'er in vain,
A random arrow from the brain.

"It may be that no life is found,
Which only to one engine bound
Falls off, but cycles always round.

"As old mythologies relate,
Some draught of Lethe might await
The slipping through from state to state.

"As here we find in trances, men 10
Forget the dream that happens then,
Until they fall in trance again.

"So might we, if our state were such
As one before, remember much,
For those two likes might meet and touch.

"But, if I lapsed from nobler place,
Some legend of a fallen race
Alone might hint of my disgrace;

"Some vague emotion of delight
In gazing up an Alpine height, 20
Some yearning toward the lamps of night.

"Or if through lower lives I came—
Though all experience past became
Consolidate in mind and frame—

"I might forget my weaker lot;
For is not our first year forgot?
The haunts of memory echo not.

"And men, whose reason long was blind,
From cells of madness unconfined,
Oft lose whole years of darker mind. 30

"Much more, if first I floated free,
As naked essence, must I be
Incompetent of memory:

"For memory dealing but with time,
And he with matter, could she climb
Beyond her own material prime?

"Moreover, something is or seems,
That touches me with mystic gleams,
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams—

"Of something felt, like something here;
Of something done, I know not where;
Such as no language may declare."

The still voice laugh'd. "I talk," said he,
"Not with thy dreams. Suffice it thee
Thy pain is a reality."

10

"But thou," said I, "hast miss'd thy mark,
Who sought'st to wreck my mortal ark,
By making all the horizon dark.

"Why not set forth, if I should do
This rashness, that which might ensue
With this old soul in organs new?

"Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
No life that breathes with human breath
Has ever truly long'd for death.

20

"'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,
Oh life, not death, for which we pant;
More life, and fuller, that I want."

I ceased, and sat as one forlorn.
Then said the voice, in quiet scorn,
"Behold, it is the Sabbath morn."

And I arose, and I released
The casement, and the light increased
With freshness in the dawning east.

30

Like soften'd airs that blowing steal,
When meres begin to uncongeal,
The sweet church bells began to peal.

On to God's house the people prest:
Passing the place where each must rest
Each enter'd like a welcome guest.

One walk'd between his wife and child,
With measur'd footfall firm and mild,
And now and then he gravely smiled.

The prudent partner of his blood
Lean'd on him, faithful, gentle, good,
Wearing the rose of womanhood.

And in their double love secure, 10
The little maiden walk'd demure,
Pacing with downward eyelids pure.

These three made unity so sweet,
My frozen heart began to beat,
Remembering its ancient heat.

I blest them, and they wander'd on:
I spoke, but answer came there none:
The dull and bitter voice was gone.

A second voice was at mine ear,
A little whisper silver-clear, 20
A murmur, "Be of better cheer."

As from some blissful neighbourhood,
A notice faintly understood,
"I see the end, and know the good."

A little hint to solace woe,
A hint, a whisper breathing low,
"I may not speak of what I know."

Like an Æolian harp that wakes
No certain air, but overtakes
Far thought with music that it makes, 30

Such seem'd the whisper at my side:
"What is it thou knowest, sweet voice?" I cried.
"A hidden hope," the voice replied:

So heavenly-toned, that in that hour
From out my sullen heart a power
Broke, like the rainbow from the shower,

To feel, although no tongue can prove,
That every cloud, that spreads above
And veileth love, itself is love.

And forth into the fields I went,
And Nature's living motion lent
The pulse of hope to discontent.

I wonder'd at the bounteous hours,
The slow result of winter showers:
You scarce could see the grass for flowers.

10

I wonder'd, while I pac'd along:
The woods were fill'd so full with song,
There seem'd no room for sense of wrong.

So variously seem'd all things wrought,
I marvell'd how the mind was brought
To anchor by one gloomy thought;

And wherefore rather I made choice
To commune with that barren voice,
Than him that said, "Rejoice! rejoice!"

20

THE GOLDEN YEAR

Well, you shall have that song which Leonard
wrote:

It was last summer on a tour in Wales:
Old James was with me: we that day had been
Up Snowdon: and I wish'd for Leonard there,
And found him in Llanberis: then we crost
Between the lakes, and clamber'd half way up
The counter side; and that same song of his
He told me; for I banter'd him, and swore
They said he lived shut up within himself,
A tongue-tied Poet in the feverous days,
That, setting the *how much* before the *how*,

30

Cry, like the daughters of the horse-leech, "Give,
Cram us with all," but count not me the herd!

To which, "They call me what they will," he said:

"But I was born too late: the fair new forms,
That float about the threshold of an age,
Like truths of Science waiting to be caught—
Catch me who can, and make the catcher
crown'd—

Are taken by the forelock. Let it be.

But if you care indeed to listen, hear

These measured words, my work of yestermorn. 10

"We sleep and wake and sleep, but all things
move;

The Sun flies forward to his brother Sun;
The dark Earth follows wheel'd in her ellipse;
And human things returning on themselves
Move onward, leading up the golden year.

"Ah, though the times, when some new thought
can bud,

Are but as poets' seasons when they flower,
Yet seas, that daily gain upon the shore,
Have ebb and flow conditioning their march,
And slow and sure comes up the golden year. 20

"When wealth no more shall rest in mounded
heaps,

But smit with freer light shall slowly melt
In many streams to fatten lower lands,
And light shall spread, and man be liker man
Through all the season of the golden year.

"Shall eagles not be eagles? wrens be wrens?
If all the world were falcons, what of that?
The wonder of the eagle were the less,
But he not less the eagle. Happy days
Roll onward, leading up the golden year. 30

"Fly, happy happy sails, and bear the Press;
Fly happy with the mission of the Cross;
Knit land to land, and blowing havenward
With silks, and fruits, and spices, clear of toll,
Enrich the markets of the golden year.

"But we grow old. Ah! when shall all men's good
Be each man's rule, and universal Peace
Lie like a shaft of light across the land,

And like a lane of beams athwart the sea,
Through all the circle of the golden year?"

Thus far he flow'd, and ended; whereupon
"Ah, folly!" in mimic cadence answer'd James—
"Ah, folly! for it lies so far away,
Not in our time, nor in our children's time,
'Tis like the second world to us that live:
'Twere all as one to fix our hopes on Heaven
As on this vision of the golden year."

With that he struck his staff against the rocks 10
And broke it,—James,—you know him,—old, but
full

Of force and choler, and firm upon his feet,
And like an oaken stock in winter woods,
O'erflourish'd with the hoary clematis:
Then added, all in heat:

"What stuff is this!
Old writers push'd the happy season back,—
The more fools they,—we forward: dreamers both
You most, that in an age, when every hour
Must sweat her sixty minutes to the death,
Live on, God love us, as if the seedsman, rapt 20
Upon the teeming harvest, should not dip
His hand into the bag: but well I know
That unto him who works, and feels he works,
This same grand year is ever at the doors."

He spoke; and, high above, I heard them blast
The steep slate-quarry, and the great echo flap
And buffet round the hills from bluff to bluff.

LYRICS FROM THE PRINCESS

Sweet and low, sweet and low,
Wind of the western sea,
Low, low, breathe and blow,
Wind of the western sea!

Over the rolling waters go,
Come from the dying moon, and blow,
Blow him again to me;

While my little one, while my pretty one, sleeps.

Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,
 Father will come to thee soon;
 Rest, rest, on mother's breast,
 Father will come to thee soon;
 Father will come to his babe in the nest,
 Silver sails all out of the west
 Under the silver moon:
 Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one, sleep.

The splendour falls on castle walls
 And snowy summits old in story; 10
 The long light shakes across the lakes,
 And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
 Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
 Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,
 And thinner, clearer, farther going!
 O sweet and far from cliff and scar
 The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
 Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:
 Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying. 20

O love, they die in yon rich sky;
 They faint on hill or field or river:
 Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
 And grow for ever and for ever.
 Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
 And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
 Tears from the depth of some divine despair
 Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
 In looking on the happy Autumn fields,
 And thinking of the days that are no more. 30

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
 That brings our friends up from the underworld,
 Sad as the last which reddens over one

That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
On lips that are for others; deep as love, 10
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more.

O Swallow, Swallow, flying, flying South,
Fly to her, and fall upon her gilded eaves,
And tell her, tell her what I tell to thee.

O tell her, Swallow, thou that knowest each,
That bright and fierce and fickle is the South,
And dark and true and tender is the North.

O Swallow, Swallow, if I could follow, and
light
Upon her lattice, I would pipe and trill 20
And cheep and twitter twenty million loves.

O were I thou that she might take me in
And lay me on her bosom, and her heart
Would rock the snowy cradle till I died.

Why lingereth she to clothe her heart with love,
Delaying as the tender ash delays
To clothe herself, when all the woods are green?

O tell her, Swallow, that thy brood is flown:
Say to her, I do but wanton in the South,
But in the North long since my nest is made. 30

O tell her, brief is life but love is long,
And brief the sun of summer in the North,
And brief the moon of beauty in the South.

O Swallow, flying from the golden woods,
Fly to her, and pipe and woo her, and make her mine,
And tell her, tell her, that I follow thee.

Home they brought her warrior dead:
She nor swoon'd, nor utter'd cry:
All her maidens, watching, said,
"She must weep, or she will die."

10

Then they praised him, soft and low,
Call'd him worthy to be loved,
Truest friend and noblest foe;
Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

Stole a maiden from her place,
Lightly to the warrior stept,
Took the face-cloth from the face;
Yet she neither moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,
Set his child upon her knee;
Like summer tempest came her tears—
"Sweet my child, I live for thee."

20

Ask me no more: the moon may draw the sea;
The cloud may stoop from heaven and take the
shape,
With fold to fold, of mountain or of cape;
But, O too fond, when have I answer'd thee?
Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: what answer should I give?
I love not hollow cheek or faded eye:
Yet, O my friend, I will not have thee die!

30

Ask me no more, lest I should bid thee live;
Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: thy fate and mine are seal'd:
I strove against the stream, and all in vain:
Let the great river take me to the main:
No more, dear love, for at a touch I yield;
Ask me no more.

Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height:
What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd sang),
In height and cold, the splendour of the hills? 10
But cease to move so near the heavens, and cease
To glide a sunbeam by the blasted pine,
To sit a star upon the sparkling spire;
And come, for Love is of the valley, come,
For Love is of the valley, come thou down
And find him; by the happy threshold, he,
Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,
Or red with spirted purple of the vats,
Or foxlike in the vine; nor cares to walk 20
With Death and Morning on the silver horns,
Nor wilt thou snare him in the white ravine,
Nor find him dropt upon the firths of ice,
That huddling slant in furrow-cloven falls
To roll the torrent out of dusky doors:
But follow; let the torrent dance thee down
To find him in the valley; let the wild
Lean-headed eagles yelp alone, and leave
The monstrous ledges there to slope, and spill
Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke,
That like a broken purpose waste in air: 30
So waste not thou; but come; for all the vales
Await thee; azure pillars of the hearth
Arise to thee; the children call, and I
Thy shepherd pipe, and sweet is every sound,
Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet;
Myriads of rivulets hurrying through the lawn,
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.

IN MEMORIAM

A. H. H.

OBIIT MDCCCXXXIII

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
 Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
 By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
 Believing where we cannot prove;

Thine are these orbs of light and shade;
 Thou madest Life in man and brute;
 Thou madest Death; and lo, thy foot
 Is on the skull which thou hast made.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:
 Thou madest man, he knows not why;
 He thinks he was not made to die;
 And thou hast made him: thou art just.

Thou seemest human and divine,
 The highest, holiest manhood thou:
 Our wills are ours, we know not how;
 Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

Our little systems have their day;
 They have their day, and cease to be
 They are but broken lights of thee,
 And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

We have but faith: we cannot know;
 For knowledge is of things we see;
 And yet we trust it comes from thee,
 A beam in darkness: let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
 But more of reverence in us dwell;
 That mind and soul, according well,
 May make one music as before,

*reference to systems such as
 various orders of the universe*

*Freeman's
 our physical bodies! "In the
 image of God made the man
 I believe it*

But vaster. We are fools and slight;
We mock thee when we do not fear:
But help thy foolish ones to bear,
Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light.

Forgive what seem'd my sin in me,
What seem'd my worth since I began;
For merit lives from man to man,
And not from man, O Lord, to thee.

Forgive my grief for one removed,
Thy creature, whom I found so fair. 10
I trust he lives in thee, and there
I find him worthier to be loved.

Forgive these wild and wandering cries,
Confusions of a wasted youth;
Forgive them where they fail in truth,
And in thy wisdom make me wise.

1849.

I

Goethe

I held it truth, with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things. 20

But who shall so forecast the years
And find in loss a gain to match?
Or reach a hand through time to catch
The far-off interest of tears?

Let Love clasp Grief lest both be drown'd,
Let darkness keep her raven gloss;
Ah, sweeter to be drunk with loss,
To dance with death, to beat the ground,

Than that the victor Hours should scorn
The long result of love, and boast: 30
"Behold the man that loved and lost,
But all he was is overworn."

II

Old Yew, which graspest at the stones
 That name the under-lying dead,
 Thy fibres net the dreamless head,
 Thy roots are wrapt about the bones.

The seasons bring the flower again,
 And bring the firstling to the flock;
 And in the dusk of thee, the clock
 Beats out the little lives of men.

Oh not for thee the glow, the bloom,
 Who changest not in any gale!
 Nor branding summer suns avail
 To touch thy thousand years of gloom.

10

And gazing on the sullen tree,
 Sick for thy stubborn hardihood,
 I seem to fail from out my blood,
 And grow incorporate into thee.

III

O Sorrow, cruel fellowship,
 O Priestess in the vaults of Death,
 O sweet and bitter in a breath,
 What whispers from thy lying lip?

20

"The stars," she whispers, "blindly run;
 A web is wov'n across the sky;
 From out waste places comes a cry,
 And murmurs from the dying sun:

"And all the phantom, Nature, stands—
 With all her music in her tone,
 A hollow echo of my own,—
 A hollow form with empty hands."

And shall I take a thing so blind,
 Embrace her as my natural good;

30

*See Whitehead's discussion
 of this.*

Or crush her, like a vice of blood,
Upon the threshold of the mind?

IV

To Sleep I give my powers away;
My will is bondsman to the dark;
I sit within a helmless bark,
And with my heart I muse and say:

O heart, how fares it with thee now,
That thou shouldst fail from thy desire,
Who scarcely darest to inquire,
“What is it makes me beat so low?”

16

Something it is which thou hast lost,
Some pleasure from thine early years.
Break, thou deep vase of chilling tears,
That grief hath shaken into frost!

Such clouds of nameless trouble cross
All night below the darken'd eyes;
With morning wakes the will, and cries,
“Thou shalt not be the fool of loss.”

V

I sometimes hold it half a sin
To put in words the grief I feel;
For words, like Nature, half reveal
And half conceal the Soul within.

20

But, for the unquiet heart and brain,
A use in measured language lies;
The sad mechanic exercise,
Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.

In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,
Like coarsest clothes against the cold;
But that large grief which these enfold
Is given in outline, and no more.

30

VI

One writes, that "Other friends remain,"
That "Loss is common to the race"—
And common is the commonplace,
And vacant chaff well meant for grain.

That loss is common would not make
My own less bitter, rather more:
Too common! Never morning wore
To evening, but some heart did break.

O father, wheresoe'er thou be,
That pledgest now thy gallant son;
A shot, ere half thy draught be done,
Hath still'd the life that beat from thee.

10

O mother, praying God will save
Thy sailor,—while thy head is bow'd,
His heavy-shotted hammock-shroud
Drops in his vast and wandering grave.

Ye know no more than I who wrought
At that last hour to please him well;
Who mused on all I had to tell,
And something written, something thought;

20

Expecting still his advent home;
And ever met him on his way
With wishes, thinking, here to-day,
Or here to-morrow will he come.

O somewhere, meek, unconscious dove,
That sittest ranging golden hair;
And glad to find thyself so fair,
Poor child, that waitest for thy love!

For now her father's chimney glows
In expectation of a guest;
And thinking "This will please him best,"
She takes a riband or a rose;

30

For he will see them on to-night:
And with the thought her colour burns;
And, having left the glass, she turns
Once more to set a ringlet right;

And, even when she turn'd, the curse
Had fallen, and her future Lord
Was drown'd in passing through the ford,
Or kill'd in falling from his horse.

Oh what to her shall be the end?
And what to me remains of good? 10
To her, perpetual maidenhood;
And unto me, no second friend.

VII

Dark house, by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street,
Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasp'd no more—
Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
And like a guilty thing I creep
At earliest morning to the door. 20

He is not here; but far away
The noise of life begins again,
And ghastly through the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day.

VIII

A happy lover who has come
To look on her that loves him well,
Who lights and rings the gateway bell,
And learns her gone and far from home,

He saddens; all the magic light
Dies off at once from bower and hall; 30

And all the place is dark, and all
The chambers emptied of delight:

So find I every pleasant spot
In which we two were wont to meet,
The field, the chamber, and the street,
For all is dark where thou art not.

Yet as that other, wandering there
In those deserted walks, may find
A flower beat with rain and wind,
Which once she foster'd up with care;

10

So seems it in my deep regret,
O my forsaken heart, with thee
And this poor flower of poesy
Which little cared for fades not yet.

But since it pleased a vanish'd eye,
I go to plant it on his tomb,
That if it can it there may bloom,
Or dying there at least may die.

IX

Fair ship, that from the Italian shore,
Saiest the placid ocean-plains
With my lost Arthur's loved remains,
Spread thy full wings, and waft him o'er.

20

So draw him home to those that mourn
In vain; a favourable speed
Ruffle thy mirror'd mast, and lead
Through prosperous floods his holy urn.

All night no ruder air perplex
Thy sliding keel, till Phosphor, bright
As our pure love, through early light
Shall glimmer on the dewy decks.

30

Sphere all your lights around, above;
Sleep, gentle heavens, before the prow;

Sleep, gentle winds, as he sleeps now,
My friend, the brother of my love;

My Arthur, whom I shall not see
Till all my widow'd race be run;
Dear as the mother to the son,
More than my brothers are to me.

X

I hear the noise about thy keel;
I hear the bell struck in the night;
I see the cabin-window bright;
I see the sailor at the wheel.

10

Thou bring'st the sailor to his wife,
And travell'd men from foreign lands;
And letters unto trembling hands;
And, thy dark freight, a vanish'd life.

So bring him: we have idle dreams:
This look of quiet flatters thus
Our home-bred fancies: oh, to us,
The fools of habit, sweeter seems

To rest beneath the clover sod,
That takes the sunshine and the rains,
Or where the kneeling hamlet drains
The chalice of the grapes of God;

20

Than if with thee the roaring wells
Should gulf him fathom-deep in brine;
And hands so often clasp'd in mine,
Should toss with tangle and with shells.

XI

Calm is the morn without a sound,
Calm as to suit a calmer grief,
And only through the faded leaf
The chestnut pattering to the ground:

30

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,
And on these dewes that drench the furze,
And all the silvery gossamers
That twinkle into green and gold:

Calm and still light on yon great plain
That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,
And crowded farms and lessening towers,
To mingle with the bounding main:

Calm and deep peace in this wide air,
These leaves that redden to the fall;
And in my heart, if calm at all,
If any calm, a calm despair:

10

Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,
And waves that sway themselves in rest,
And dead calm in that noble breast
Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

XII

Lo, as a dove when up she springs
To bear through Heaven a tale of woe,
Some dolorous message knit below
The wild pulsation of her wings;

20

Like her I go; I cannot stay;
I leave this mortal ark behind,
A weight of nerves without a mind,
And leave the cliffs, and haste away

O'er ocean-mirrors rounded large,
And reach the glow of southern skies,
And see the sails at distance rise,
And linger weeping on the marge,

And saying: "Comes he thus, my friend?
Is this the end of all my care?"
And circle moaning in the air:
"Is this the end? Is this the end?"

30

And forward dart again, and play
About the prow, and back return
To where the body sits, and learn
That I have been an hour away.

XIII

Tears of the widower, when he sees
A late-lost form that sleep reveals,
And moves his doubtful arms, and feels
Her place is empty, fall like these;

Which weep a loss for ever new,
A void where heart on heart reposed; 10
And, where warm hands have prest and closed,
Silence, till I be silent too.

Which weep the comrade of my choice,
An awful thought, a life removed,
The human-hearted man I loved,
A spirit, not a breathing voice.

Come, Time, and teach me many years
I do not suffer in a dream;
For now so strange do these things seem,
Mine eyes have leisure for their tears; 20

My fancies time to rise on wing,
And glance about the approaching sails,
As though they brought but merchants' bales,
And not the burthen that they bring.

XIV

If one should bring me this report,
That thou hadst touch'd the land to-day,
And I went down unto the quay,
And found thee lying in the port;

And standing, muffled round with woe,
Should see thy passengers in rank 30
Come stepping lightly down the plank,
And beckoning unto those they know;

And if along with these should come
The man I held as half-divine;
Should strike a sudden hand in mine,
And ask a thousand things of home;

And I should tell him all my pain,
And how my life had droop'd of late,
And he should sorrow o'er my state
And marvel what possess'd my brain;

And I perceived no touch of change,
No hint of death in all his frame,
But found him all in all the same
I should not feel it to be strange.

10

xv

To-night the winds begin to rise
And roar from yonder dropping day;
The last red leaf is whirl'd away,
The rooks are blown about the skies;

The forest crack'd, the waters curl'd,
The cattle huddled on the lea;
And wildly dash'd on tower and tree
The sunbeam strikes along the world:

20

And but for fancies, which aver
That all thy motions gently pass
Athwart a plane of molten glass,
I scarce could brook the strain and stir

That makes the barren branches loud;
And but for fear it is not so,
The wild unrest that lives in woe
Would dote and pore on yonder cloud

That rises upward always higher,
And onward drags a labouring breast,
And topples round the dreary west,
A looming bastion fringed with fire.

30

XVI

What words are these have fall'n from me?
Can calm despair and wild unrest
Be tenants of a single breast,
Or sorrow such a changeling be?

Or doth she only seem to take
The touch of change in calm or storm
But knows no more of transient form
In her deep self, than some dead lake

That holds the shadow of a lark
Hung in the shadow of a heaven? 10
Or has the shock, so harshly given,
Confused me like the unhappy bark

That strikes by night a craggy shelf,
And staggers blindly ere she sink?
And stunn'd me from my power to think,
And all my knowledge of myself;

And made me that delirious man
Whose fancy fuses old and new,
And flashes into false and true,
And mingles all without a plan? 20

XVII

Thou comest, much wept for: such a breeze
Compell'd thy canvas, and my prayer
Was as the whisper of an air
To breathe thee over lonely seas.

For I in spirit saw thee move
Through circles of the bounding sky;
Week after week: the days go by:
Come quick, thou bringest all I love.

Henceforth, wherever thou mayst roam,
My blessing, like a line of light,

Is on the waters day and night,
And like a beacon guards thee home.

So may whatever tempest mars
Mid-ocean, spare thee, sacred bark;
And balmy drops in summer dark
Slide from the bosom of the stars.

So kind an office hath been done,
Such precious relics brought by thee;
The dust of him I shall not see
Till all my widow'd race be run.

10

XVIII

'Tis well, 'tis something, we may stand
Where he in English earth is laid,
And from his ashes may be made
The violet of his native land.

'Tis little; but it looks in truth
As if the quiet bones were blest
Among familiar names to rest
And in the places of his youth.

Come then, pure hands, and bear the head
That sleeps, or wears the mask of sleep,
And come, whatever loves to weep,
And hear the ritual of the dead.

20

Ah yet, ev'n yet, if this might be,
I, falling on his faithful heart,
Would breathing through his lips impart
The life that almost dies in me:

That dies not, but endures with pain,
And slowly forms the firmer mind,
Treasuring the look it cannot find,
The words that are not heard again.

30

XIX

The Danube to the Severn gave
The darken'd heart that beat no more;
They laid him by the pleasant shore,
And in the hearing of the wave.

There twice a day the Severn fills;
The salt sea-water passes by,
And hushes half the babbling Wye,
And makes a silence in the hills.

The Wye is hush'd nor moved along;
And hush'd my deepest grief of all, 10
When fill'd with tears that cannot fall,
I brim with sorrow drowning song.

The tide flows down, the wave again
Is vocal in its wooded walls:
My deeper anguish also falls,
And I can speak a little then.

XX

The lesser griefs that may be said,
That breathe a thousand tender vows,
Are but as servants in a house
Where lies the master newly dead; 20

Who speak their feeling as it is,
And weep the fullness from the mind:
"It will be hard," they say, "to find
Another service such as this."

My lighter moods are like to these,
That out of words a comfort win;
But there are other griefs within,
And tears that at their fountain freeze;

For by the hearth the children sit
Cold in that atmosphere of Death, 30

And scarce endure to draw the breath,
Or like to noiseless phantoms flit:

But open converse is there none,
So much the vital spirits sink
To see the vacant chair, and think,
"How good! how kind! and he is gone."

XXI

I sing to him that rests below,
And, since the grasses round me wave,
I take the grasses of the grave
And make them pipes whereon to blow.

10

The traveller hears me now and then,
And sometimes harshly will he speak:
"This fellow would make weakness weak,
And melt the waxen hearts of men."

Another answers: "Let him be,
He loves to make parade of pain,
That with his piping he may gain
The praise that comes to constancy."

A third is wroth: "Is this an hour
For private sorrow's barren song,
When more and more the people throng
The chairs and thrones of civil power?"

20

"A time to sicken and to swoon,
When Science reaches forth her arms
To feel from world to world, and charms
Her secret from the latest moon?"

Behold, ye speak an idle thing:
Ye never knew the sacred dust:
I do but sing because I must,
And pipe but as the linnets sing:

30

And unto one her note is gay,
For now her little ones have ranged;

And unto one her note is changed,
Because her brood is stol'n away.

XXII

The path by which we twain did go,
Which led by tracts that pleased us well,
Through four sweet years arose and fell,
From flower to flower, from snow to snow:

And we with singing cheer'd the way,
And crown'd with all the season lent,
From April on to April went,
And glad at heart from May to May:

10

But where the path we walk'd began
To slant the fifth autumnal slope,
As we descended following Hope,
There sat the Shadow fear'd of man;

Who broke our fair companionship,
And spread his mantle dark and cold,
And wrapt thee formless in the fold,
And dull'd the murmur on thy lip,

And bore thee where I could not see
Nor follow, though I walk in haste,
And think that, somewhere in the waste,
The Shadow sits and waits for me.

20

XXIII

Now, sometimes in my sorrow shut,
Or breaking into song by fits,
Alone, alone, to where he sits,
The Shadow cloak'd from head to foot,

Who keeps the keys of all the creeds,
I wander, often falling lame,
And looking back to whence I came,
Or on to where the pathway leads;

30

And crying, How changed from where it ran
Through lands where not a leaf was dumb;
But all the lavish hills would hum
The murmur of a happy Pan:

When each by turns was guide to each,
And Fancy light from Fancy caught,
And Thought leapt out to wed with Thought,
Ere Thought could wed itself with Speech;

And all we met was fair and good,
And all was good that Time could bring,
And all the secret of the Spring
Moved in the chambers of the blood;

10

And many an old philosophy
On Argive heights divinely sang,
And round us all the thicket rang
To many a flute of Arcady.

XXIV

And was the day of my delight
As pure and perfect as I say?
The very source and fount of Day
Is dash'd with wandering isles of night.

20

If all was good and fair we met,
This earth had been the Paradise
It never look'd to human eyes
Since Adam left his garden yet.

And is it that the haze of grief
Makes former gladness loom so great?
The lowness of the present state,
That sets the past in this relief?

Or that the past will always win
A glory from its being far;
And orb into the perfect star
We saw not, when we moved therein?

30

XXV

I know that this was Life—the track
Whereon with equal feet we fared;
And then, as now the day prepared
The daily burden for the back.

But this it was that made me move
As light as carrier-birds in air;
I loved the weight I had to bear,
Because it needed help of Love:

Nor could I weary, heart or limb,
When mighty Love would cleave in twain 10
The lading of a single pain,
And part it, giving half to him.

XXVI

Still onward winds the dreary way;
I with it; for I long to prove
No lapse of moons can canker Love,
Whatever fickle tongues may say.

And if that eye which watches guilt
And goodness, and hath power to see
Within the green the moulder'd tree,
And towers fall'n as soon as built— 20

Oh, if indeed that eye foresee
Or see (in Him is no before)
In more of life true life no more,
And Love the indifference to be,

So might I find, ere yet the morn
Breaks hither over Indian seas,
That Shadow waiting with the keys
To cloak me from my proper scorn.

XXVII

I envy not in any moods
The captive void of noble rage,
The linnet born within the cage
That never knew the summer woods:

I envy not the beast that takes
His license in the field of time,
Unfetter'd by the sense of crime,
To whom a conscience never wakes;

Nor, what may count itself as blest,
The heart that never plighted troth
But stagnates in the weeds of sloth,
Nor any want-begotten rest.

10

I hold it true whate'er befall,
I feel it when I sorrow most,
'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

XXVIII

The time draws near the birth of Christ:
The moon is hid, the night is still;
The Christmas bells from hill to hill
Answer each other in the mist.

20

Four voices of four hamlets round,
From far and near, on mead and moor,
Swell out and fail, as if a door
Were shut between me and the sound:

Each voice four changes on the wind,
That now dilate, and now decrease,
Peace and goodwill, goodwill and peace,
Peace and goodwill, to all mankind.

This year I slept and woke with pain,
I almost wish'd no more to wake,

30

And that my hold on life would break
Before I heard those bells again:

But they my troubled spirit rule,
For they controll'd me when a boy;
They bring me sorrow touch'd with joy,
The merry merry bells of Yule.

XXIX

With such compelling cause to grieve
As daily vexes household peace,
And chains regret to his decease,
How dare we keep our Christmas-eve;

10

Which brings no more a welcome guest
To enrich the threshold of the night
With shower'd largess of delight,
In dance and song and game and jest?

Yet go, and while the holly boughs
Entwine the cold baptismal font,
Make one wreath more for Use and Wont
That guard the portals of the house;

Old sisters of a day gone by,
Gray nurses, loving nothing new,
Why should they miss their yearly due
Before their time? They too will die.

20

XXX

With trembling fingers did we weave
The holly round the Christmas hearth;
A rainy cloud possess'd the earth,
And sadly fell our Christmas-eve.

At our old pastimes in the hall
We gamboll'd, making vain pretence
Of gladness, with an awful sense
Of one mute Shadow watching all.

30

We paused: the winds were in the beech:
We heard them sweep the winter land;
And in a circle hand-in-hand
Sat silent, looking each at each.

Then echolike our voices rang;
We sung, though every eye was dim,
A merry song we sang with him
Last year: impetuously we sang:

We ceased: a gentler feeling crept
Upon us: surely rest is meet:
"They rest," we said, "their sleep is sweet," 10
And silence follow'd, and we wept.

Our voices took a higher range;
Once more we sang: "They do not die,
Nor lose their mortal sympathy,
Nor change to us, although they change:

"Rapt from the fickle and the frail
With gather'd power, yet the same,
Pierces the keen seraphic flame
From orb to orb, from veil to veil." 20

Rise, happy morn! rise, holy morn!
Draw forth the cheerful day from night:
O Father! touch the east, and light
The light that shone when Hope was born.

XXXI

When Lazarus left his charnel-cave,
And home to Mary's house return'd,
Was this demanded—if he yearn'd
To hear her weeping by his grave?

"Where wert thou, brother, those four days?"
There lives no record of reply,
Which telling what it is to die
Had surely added praise to praise. 30

From every house the neighbours met,
The streets were fill'd with joyful sound,
A solemn gladness even crown'd
The purple brows of Olivet.

Behold a man raised up by Christ!
The rest remaineth unreveal'd;
He told it not; or something seal'd
The lips of that Evangelist.

XXXII

Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,
Nor other thought her mind admits 10
But, he was dead, and there he sits,
And he that brought him back is there.

Then one deep love doth supersede
All other, when her ardent gaze
Roves from the living brother's face,
And rests upon the Life indeed.

All subtle thought, all curious fears,
Borne down by gladness so complete,
She bows, she bathes the Saviour's feet
With costly spikenard and with tears. 20

Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers,
Whose loves in higher love endure;
What souls possess themselves so pure,
Or is there blessedness like theirs?

XXXIII

O thou that after toil and storm
Mayst seem to have reach'd a purer air,
Whose faith has centre everywhere,
Nor cares to fix itself to form,

Leave thou thy sister, when she prays,
Her early Heaven, her happy views; 30

Nor thou with shadow'd hint confuse
A life that leads melodious days.

Her faith through form is pure as thine,
Her hands are quicker unto good.
Oh, sacred be the flesh and blood
To which she links a truth divine!

See thou, that countest reason ripe
In holding by the law within,
Thou fail not in a world of sin,
And ev'n for want of such a type.

10

XXXIV

My own dim life should teach me this,
That life shall live for evermore,
Else earth is darkness at the core,
And dust and ashes all that is;

This round of green, this orb of flame,
Fantastic beauty, such as lurks
In some wild Poet, when he works
Without a conscience or an aim.

What then were God to such as I?
'Twere hardly worth my while to choose
Of things all mortal, or to use
A little patience ere I die;

20

'Twere best at once to sink to peace;
Like birds the charming serpent draws,
To drop head-foremost in the jaws
Of vacant darkness, and to cease.

XXXV

Yet if some voice that man could trust
Should murmur from the narrow house,
"The cheeks drop in; the body bows;
Man dies: nor is there hope in dust:"

30

Might I not say, "Yet even here,
But for one hour, O Love, I strive
To keep so sweet a thing alive"?
But I should turn mine ears and hear

The moanings of the homeless sea,
The sound of streams that swift or slow
Draw down Æonian hills, and sow
The dust of continents to be;

And Love would answer with a sigh,
"The sound of that forgetful shore
Will change my sweetness more and more,
Half dead to know that I shall die."

10

Oh me, what profits it to put
An idle case? If Death were seen
At first as Death, Love had not been,
Or been in narrowest working shut,

Mere fellowship of sluggish moods,
Or in his coarsest Satyr-shape
Had bruised the herb and crush'd the grape,
And bask'd and batten'd in the woods.

20

XXXVI

Though truths in manhood darkly join,
Deep-seated in our mystic frame,
We yield all blessing to the name
Of Him that made them current coin;

For Wisdom dealt with mortal powers,
Where Truth in closest words shall fail,
When Truth embodied in a tale
Shall enter in at lowly doors.

And so the Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought;

30

Which he may read that binds the sheaf,
 Or builds the house, or digs the grave,
 And those wild eyes that watch the wave
 In roarings round the coral reef.

XXXVII

Urania speaks with darken'd brow:
 "Thou pratest here where thou art least;
 This faith has many a purer priest,
 And many an abler voice than thou.

"Go down beside thy native rill,
 On thy Parnassus set thy feet,
 And hear thy laurel whisper sweet
 About the ledges of the hill."

10

And my Melpomene replies,
 A touch of shame upon her cheek:
 "I am not worthy but to speak
 Of thy prevailing mysteries;

"For I am but an earthly Muse,
 And owning but a little art
 To lull with song an aching heart,
 And render human love his dues;

20

"But brooding on the dear one dead,
 And all he said of things divine,
 (And dear as sacramental wine
 To dying lips is all he said),

"I murmur'd, as I came along,
 Of comfort clasp'd in truth reveal'd;
 And loiter'd in the master's field,
 And darkened sanctities with song."

XXXVIII

With weary steps I loiter on,
 Though always under alter'd skies

30

The purple from the distance dies,
My prospect and horizon gone.

No joy the blowing season gives,
The herald melodies of spring,
But in the songs I love to sing
A doubtful gleam of solace lives.

If any care for what is here
Survive in spirits render'd free,
Then are these songs I sing of thee
Not all ungrateful to thine ear.

10

XXXIX

Could we forget the widow'd hour,
And look on spirits breathed away,
As on a maiden in the day
When first she wears her orange-flower!

When crown'd with blessing she doth rise
To take her latest leave of home,
And hopes and light regrets that come
Make April of her tender eyes;

And doubtful joys the father move,
And tears are on the mother's face,
As parting with a long embrace
She enters other realms of love;

20

Her office there to rear, to teach,
Becoming as is meet and fit
A link among the days, to knit
The generations each with each;

And, doubtless, unto thee is given
A life that bears immortal fruit
In such great offices as suit
The full-grown energies of heaven.

30

Ay me, the difference I discern!
How often shall her old fireside

Be cheer'd with tidings of the bride,
How often she herself return,

And tell them all they would have told,
And bring her babe, and make her boast,
Till even those that miss'd her most
Shall count new things as dear as old:

But thou and I have shaken hands,
Till growing winters lay me low;
My paths are in the fields I know,
And thine in undiscover'd lands.

10

XL

Thy spirit ere our fatal loss
Did ever rise from high to higher;
As mounts the heavenward altar-fire,
As flies the lighter through the gross.

But thou art turn'd to something strange,
And I have lost the links that bound
Thy changes; here upon the ground;
No more partaker of thy change.

Deep folly! yet that this could be—
That I could wing my will with might
To leap the grades of life and light,
And flash at once, my friend, to thee:

20

For though my nature rarely yields
To that vague fear implied in death;
Nor shudders at the gulfs beneath,
The howlings from forgotten fields;

Yet oft when sundown skirts the moor
An inner trouble I behold,
A spectral doubt which makes me cold,
That I shall be thy mate no more,

30

Though following with an upward mind
The wonders that have come to thee,

Through all the secular to-be,
But evermore a life behind.

XLI

I vex my heart with fancies dim:
He still outstript me in the race;
It was but unity of place
That made me dream I rank'd with him.

And so may Place retain us still,
And he the much-beloved again,
A lord of large experience, train
To riper growth the mind and will:

10

And what delights can equal those
That stir the spirit's inner deeps,
When one that loves but knows not, reaps
A truth from one that loves and knows?

XLII

If Sleep and Death be truly one,
And every spirit's folded bloom
Through all its intervital gloom
In some long trance should slumber on;

Unconscious of the sliding hour,
Bare of the body, might it last,
And silent traces of the past
Be all the colour of the flower:

20

So then were nothing lost to man;
But that still garden of the souls
In many a figured leaf enrolls
The total world since life began:

And love would last as pure and whole
As when he loved me here in Time,
And at the spiritual prime
Reawaken with the dawning soul.

30

XLIH

How fares it with the happy dead?
 For here the man is more and more;
 But he forgets the days before
 God shut the doorways of his head.

The days have vanish'd, tone and tint,
 And yet perhaps the hoarding sense
 Gives out at times (he knows not whence)
 A little flash, a mystic hint;

And in the long harmonious years
 (If Death so taste Lethean springs)
 May some dim touch of earthly things
 Surprise thee ranging with thy peers.

10

If such a dreamy touch should fall,
 O turn thee round, resolve the doubt;
 My guardian angel will speak out
 In that high place, and tell thee all.

XLIV

The baby new to earth and sky,
 What time his tender palm is prest
 Against the circle of the breast,
 Has never thought that "This is I."

*Prenatal
existence*

20

But as he grows he gathers much,
 And learns the use of "I," and "me,"
 And finds "I am not what I see,"
 And other than the things I touch."

So rounds he to a separate mind
 From whence clear memory may begin,
 As through the frame that binds him in
 His isolation grows defined.

This use may lie in blood and breath,
 Which else were fruitless of their due,

30

Had man to learn himself anew
Beyond the second birth of Death.

XLV

We ranging down this lower track,
The path we came by, thorn and flower,
Is shadow'd by the growing hour,
Lest life should fail in looking back.

So be it: there no shade can last
In that deep dawn behind the tomb,
But clear from marge to marge shall bloom
The eternal landscape of the past;

10

A lifelong tract of time reveal'd;
The fruitful hours of still increase;
Days order'd in a wealthy peace,
And those five years its richest field.

O Love, thy province were not large,
A bounded field, nor stretching far;
Look also, Love, a brooding star,
A rosy warmth from marge to marge.

XLVI

That each, who seems a separate whole,
Should move his rounds, and fusing all
The skirts of self again, should fall
Remerging in the general Soul,

20

Is faith as vague as all unsweet:
Eternal form shall still divide
The eternal soul from all beside;
And I shall know him when we meet:

And we shall sit at endless feast,
Enjoying each the other's good;
What vaster dream can hit the mood
Of Love on earth? He seeks at least

30

Upon the last and sharpest height,
Before the spirits fade away,
Some landing-place, to clasp and say,
"Farewell! We lose ourselves in light."

XLVII

If these brief lays, of Sorrow born,
Were taken to be such as closed
Grave doubts and answers here proposed,
Then these were such as men might scorn.

Her care is not to part and prove;
She takes, when harsher moods remit,
What slender shade of doubt may flit,
And makes it vassal unto love:

10

And hence, indeed, she sports with words;
But better serves a wholesome law,
And holds it sin and shame to draw
The deepest measure from the chords.

Nor dare she trust a larger lay,
But rather loosens from the lip
Short swallow-flights of song, that dip
Their wings in tears, and skim away.

20

XLVIII

From art, from nature, from the schools,
Let random influences glance,
Like light in many a shiver'd lance
That breaks about the dappled pools:

The lightest wave of thought shall lisp,
The fancy's tenderest eddy wreathe,
The slightest air of song shall breathe
To make the sullen surface crisp.

And look thy look, and go thy way,
But blame not thou the winds that make

30

The seeming-wanton ripple break,
The tender-pencill'd shadow play.

Beneath all fancied hopes and fears,
Ay me! the sorrow deepens down,
Whose muffled motions blindly drown
The bases of my life in tears.

XLIX

Be near me when my light is low,
When the blood creeps, and the nerves prick
And tingle; and the heart is sick,
And all the wheels of being slow. 10

Be near me when the sensuous frame
Is rack'd with pangs that conquer trust,
And Time, a maniac scattering dust,
And Life, a fury slinging flame.

Be near me when my faith is dry,
And men the flies of latter spring,
That lay their eggs, and sting and sing,
And weave their petty cells and die.

Be near me when I fade away,
To point the term of human strife, 20
And on the low dark verge of life
The twilight of eternal day.

L

Do we indeed desire the dead
Should still be near us at our side?
Is there no baseness we would hide?
No inner vileness that we dread?

Shall he for whose applause I strove,
I had such reverence for his blame,
See with clear eye some hidden shame,
And I be lessen'd in his love? 30

I wrong the grave with fears untrue:
 Shall love be blamed for want of faith?
 There must be wisdom with great Death;
 The dead shall look me through and through.

Be near us when we climb or fall:
 Ye watch, like God, the rolling hours
 With larger other eyes than ours,
 To make allowance for us all.

LI

I cannot love thee as I ought,
 For love reflects the thing beloved;
 My words are only words, and moved
 Upon the topmost froth of thought. 10

"Yet blame not thou thy plaintive song,"
 The Spirit of true love replied;
 "Thou canst not move me from thy side,
 Nor human frailty do me wrong.

"What keeps a spirit wholly true
 To that ideal which he bears?
 What record? not the sinless years
 That breathed beneath the Syrian blue: 20

"So fret not, like an idle girl,
 That life is dash'd with flecks of sin.
 Abide: thy wealth is gather'd in,
 When Time hath sunder'd shell from pearl."

LII

How many a father have I seen,
 A sober man, among his boys,
 Whose youth was full of foolish noise,
 Who wears his manhood hale and green:

And dare we to this fancy give,
 That had the wild oat not been sown, 30

The soil, left barren, scarce had grown
The grain by which a man may live?

Oh, if we held the doctrine sound
For life outliving heats of youth,
Yet who would preach it as a truth
To those that eddy round and round?

Hold thou the good: define it well:
For fear divine Philosophy
Should push beyond her mark, and be
Procuress to the Lords of Hell.

10

LIII

Oh, yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroy'd,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;

That not a worm is cloven in vain;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.

20

Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream: but what am I?
An infant crying in the night:
An infant crying for the light:
And with no language but a cry.

30

LIV

The wish, that of the living whole
 No life may fail beyond the grave,
 Derives it not from what we have
 The likest God within the soul?

Are God and Nature then at strife,
 That Nature lends such evil dreams?
 So careful of the type she seems,
 So careless of the single life;

That I, considering everywhere
 Her secret meaning in her deeds,
 And finding that of fifty seeds
 She often brings but one to bear,

10

I falter where I firmly trod,
 And falling with my weight of cares
 Upon the great world's altar-stairs
 That slope through darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
 And gather dust and chaff, and call
 To what I feel is Lord of all,
 And faintly trust the larger hope.

20

LV

"So careful of the type?" but no.
 From scarped cliff and quarried stone
 She cries, "A thousand types are gone:
 I care for nothing, all shall go.

"Thou makest thine appeal to me:
 I bring to life, I bring to death:
 The spirit does but mean the breath:
 I know no more." And he, shall he,

Man, her last work, who seem'd so fair,
 Such splendid purpose in his eyes,

30

Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,
Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

Who trusted God was love indeed,
And love Creation's final law—
Though Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shriek'd against his creed—

Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,
Who battled for the True, the Just,
Be blown about the desert dust,
Or seal'd within the iron hills?

10

No more? A monster then, a dream,
A discord. Dragons of the prime,
That tare each other in their slime,
Were mellow music match'd with him.

O life as futile, then, as frail!
O for thy voice to soothe and bless!
What hope of answer, or redress?
Behind the veil, behind the veil.

LVI

Peace! come away: the song of woe
Is after all an earthly song:
Peace! come away: we do him wrong
To sing so wildly: let us go.

20

Come, let us go: your cheeks are pale;
But half my life I leave behind:
Methinks my friend is richly shrined,
But I shall pass; my work will fail.

Yet in these ears, till hearing dies,
One set slow bell will seem to toll
The passing of the sweetest soul
That ever look'd with human eyes.

30

I hear it now, and o'er and o'er,
Eternal greetings to the dead;

And "Ave, Ave, Ave," said
"Adieu, adieu" for evermore!

LVII

In those sad words I took farewell:
Like echoes in sepulchral halls,
As drop by drop the water falls
In vaults and catacombs, they fell;

And, falling, idly broke the peace
Of hearts that beat from day to day,
Half-conscious of their dying clay,
And those cold crypts where they shall cease.

10

The high Muse answer'd: "Wherefore grieve
Thy brethren with a fruitless tear?
Abide a little longer here,
And thou shalt take a nobler leave."

LVIII

O Sorrow, wilt thou live with me,
No casual mistress, but a wife,
My bosom-friend and half of life;
As I confess it needs must be.

O Sorrow, wilt thou rule my blood,
Be sometimes lovely like a bride,
And put thy harsher moods aside,
If thou wilt have me wise and good.

20

My centred passion cannot move,
Nor will it lessen from to-day,
But I'll have leave at times to play
As with the creature of my love;

And set thee forth, for thou art mine,
With so much hope for years to come,
That, howsoe'er I know thee, some
Could hardly tell what name were thine.

30

LIX

He pass'd; a soul of nobler tone:
My spirit loved and loves him yet,
Like some poor girl whose heart is set
On one whose rank exceeds her own.

He mixing with his proper sphere,
She finds the baseness of her lot;
Half jealous of she knows not what,
And envying all that meet him there.

The little village looks forlorn;
She sighs amid her narrow days,
Moving about the household ways,
In that dark house where she was born.

10

The foolish neighbours come and go,
And tease her till the day draws by:
At night she weeps, "How vain am I!
How should he love a thing so low?"

LX

If, in thy second state sublime,
Thy ransom'd reason change replies
With all the circle of the wise,
The perfect flower of human time;

20

And if thou cast thine eyes below,
How dimly character'd and slight,
How dwarf'd a growth of cold and night,
How blanch'd with darkness must I grow!

Yet turn thee to the doubtful shore,
Where thy first form was made a man
I loved thee, Spirit, and love, nor can
The soul of Shakespeare love thee more.

LXI

Though if an eye that's downward cast
 Could make thee somewhat blench or fail,
 Then be my love an idle tale,
And fading legend of the past;

And thou, as one that once declined,
 When he was little more than boy,
 On some unworthy heart with joy,
But lives to wed an equal mind;

And breathes a novel world, the while
 His other passion wholly dies,
 Or in the light of deeper eyes
Is matter for a flying smile.

10

LXII

Yet pity for a horse o'er-driven,
 And love in which my hound has part,
 Can hang no weight upon my heart
In its assumptions up to heaven;

And I am so much more than these,
 As thou, perchance, art more than I,
 And yet I spare them sympathy,
And I would set their pains at ease.

20

So mayst thou watch me where I weep,
 As, unto vaster motions bound,
 The circuits of thine orbit round
A higher height, a deeper deep.

LXIII

Dost thou look back on what hath been,
 As some divinely gifted man,
 Whose life in low estate began
And on a simple village green;

Who breaks his birth's invidious bar,
And grasps the skirts of happy chance,
And breasts the blows of circumstance,
And grapples with his evil star;

Who makes by force his merit known,
And lives to clutch the golden keys,
To mould a mighty state's decrees,
And shape the whisper of the throne;

And moving up from high to higher,
Becomes on Fortune's crowning slope 10
The pillar of a people's hope,
The centre of a world's desire;

Yet feels, as in a pensive dream,
When all his active powers are still,
A distant dearness in the hill,
A secret sweetness in the stream,

The limit of his narrower fate,
While yet beside its vocal springs
He played at counsellors and kings, 20
With one that was his earliest mate;

Who ploughs with pain his native lea
And reaps the labour of his hands,
Or in the furrow musing stands;
"Does my old friend remember me?"

LXIV

Sweet soul! do with me as thou wilt;
I lull a fancy trouble-tost
With "Love's too precious to be lost,
A little grain shall not be spilt."

And in that solace can I sing, 30
Till out of painful phases wrought
There flutters up a happy thought,
Self-balanced on a lightsome wing:

Since we deserved the name of friends,
And thine effect so lives in me,
A part of mine may live in thee,
And move thee on to noble ends.

LXV

You thought my heart too far diseased;
You wonder when my fancies play
To find me gay among the gay,
Like one with any trifle pleased.

The shade by which my life was crost,
Which makes a desert in the mind,
Has made me kindly with my kind,
And like to him whose sight is lost,

10

Whose feet are guided through the land,
Whose jest among his friends is free,
Who takes the children on his knee,
And winds their curls about his hand:

He plays with threads, he beats his chair
For pastime, dreaming of the sky;
His inner day can never die,
His night of loss is always there.

20

LXVI

When on my bed the moonlight falls,
I know that in thy place of rest
By that broad water of the west,
There comes a glory on the walls:

Thy marble bright in dark appears,
As slowly steals a silver flame
Along the letters of thy name,
And o'er the number of thy years.

The mystic glory swims away;
From off my bed the moonlight dies;

30

And closing eaves of wearied eyes
I sleep till dusk is dipt in gray:

And then I know the mist is drawn
A lucid veil from coast to coast,
And in the chancel like a ghost
Thy tablet glimmers to the dawn.

LXVII

When in the down I sink my head,
Sleep, Death's twin-brother, times my breath,
Sleep, Death's twin-brother, knows not Death;
Nor can I dream of thee as dead: 10

I walk as ere I walk'd forlorn,
When all our path was fresh with dew,
And all the bugle breezes blew
Reveille to the breaking morn.

But what is this? I turn about,
I find a trouble in thine eye,
Which makes me sad I know not why,
Nor can my dream resolve the doubt:

But ere the lark hath left the lea
I wake, and I discern the truth; 20
It is the trouble of my youth
That foolish sleep transfers to thee.

LXVIII

I dream'd there would be Spring no more,
That Nature's ancient power was lost:
The streets were black with smoke and frost,
They chatter'd trifles at the door.

I wander'd from the noisy town,
I found a wood with thorny boughs:
I took the thorns to bind my brows,
I wore them like a civic crown. 30

I met with scoffs, I met with scorns
 From youth and babe and hoary hairs:
 They call'd me in the public squares
 The fool that wears a crown of thorns.

They call'd me fool, they call'd me child:
 I found an angel of the night:
 The voice was low, the look was bright,
 He look'd upon my crown and smiled:

He reach'd the glory of a hand,
 That seem'd to touch it into leaf:
 The voice was not the voice of grief;
 The words were hard to understand.

10

LXIX

I cannot see the features right,
 When on the gloom I strive to paint
 The face I know; the hues are faint
 And mix with hollow masks of night:

Cloud-towers by ghostly masons wrought,
 A gulf that ever shuts and gapes,
 A hand that points, and palled shapes
 In shadowy thoroughfares of thought;

20

And crowds that stream from yawning doors,
 And shoals of pucker'd faces drive;
 Dark bulks that tumble half alive,
 And lazy lengths on boundless shores

Till all at once beyond the will
 I hear a wizard music roll,
 And through a lattice on the soul
 Looks thy fair face and makes it still.

LXX

Sleep, kinsman thou to death and trance
 And madness, thou hast forged at last

30

A night-long Present of the Past
In which we went through summer France.

Hadst thou such credit with the soul?
Then bring an opiate treble-strong,
Drug down the blindfold sense of wrong
That thus my pleasure might be whole;

While now we talk as once we talk'd
Of men and minds, the dust of change,
The days that grow to something strange,
In walking as of old we walk'd 10

Beside the river's wooded reach,
The fortress, and the mountain ridge,
The cataract flashing from the bridge,
The breaker breaking on the beach.

LXXI

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,
And howlest, issuing out of night,
With blasts that blow the poplar white,
And lash with storm the streaming pane?

Day, when my crown'd estate begun
To pine in that reverse of doom, 20
Which sicken'd every living bloom,
And blurr'd the splendour of the sun;

Who usherest in the dolorous hour
With thy quick tears that make the rose
Pull sideways, and the daisy close
Her crimson fringes to the shower;

Who mightst have heaved a windless flame
Up the deep East, or, whispering, play'd
A chequerwork of beam and shade
From hill to hill, yet look'd the same, 30

As wan, as chill, as wild as now;
Day, mark'd as with some hideous crime,

When the dark hand struck down through time,
And cancell'd nature's best: but thou,

Lift as thou mayst thy burthen'd brows
Through clouds that drench the morning star,
And whirl the ungarner'd sheaf afar,
And sow the sky with flying boughs,

And up thy vault with roaring sound
Climb thy thick moon, disastrous day;
Touch thy dull goal of joyless gray,
And hide thy shame beneath the ground.

10

LXXII

So many worlds, so much to do,
So little done, such things to be,
How know I what had need of thee,
For thou wert strong as thou wert true?

The fame is quench'd that I foresaw,
The head hath miss'd an earthly wreath:
I curse not nature; no, nor death,
For nothing is that errs from law.

We pass: the path that each man trod
Is dim, or will be dim, with weeds:
What fame is left for human deeds
In endless age? It rests with God.

20

O Hollow wraith of dying fame,
Fade wholly, while the soul exults,
And self-infolds the large results
Of force that would have forged a name.

LXXIII

As sometimes in a dead man's face,
To those that watch it more and more,
A likeness hardly seen before
Comes out—to some one of his race:

30

So, dearest, now thy brows are cold,
I see thee what thou art, and know
Thy likeness to the wise below,
Thy kindred with the great of old.

But there is more than I can see;
And what I see I leave unsaid,
Nor speak it, knowing Death has made
His darkness beautiful with thee.

LXXIV

I leave thy praises unexpress'd
In verse that brings myself relief, 10
And by the measure of my grief
I leave thy greatness to be guess'd;

What practice howsoe'er expert
In fitting aptest words to things,
Or voice the richest-toned that sings,
Hath power to give thee as thou wert?

I care not in these fading days
To raise a cry that lasts not long,
And round thee with the breeze of song
To stir a little dust of praise. 20

Thy leaf has perish'd in the green,
And, while we breathe beneath the sun,
The world which credits what is done
Is cold to all that might have been.

So here shall silence guard thy fame;
But somewhere, out of human view,
Whate'er thy hands are set to do
Is wrought with tumult of acclaim.

LXXV

Take wings of fancy, and ascend,
And in a moment set thy face

Where all the starry heavens of space
Are sharpen'd to a needle's end;

Take wings of foresight; lighten through
The secular abyss to come,
And lo, thy deepest lays are dumb
Before the mouldering of a yew;

And if the matin songs, ~~that~~ woke
The darkness of our planet, last,
Thine own shall wither in the vast,
Ere half the lifetime of an oak.

10

Ere these have clothed their branchy bowers
With fifty Mays, thy songs are vain;
And what are they when these remain
The ruin'd shells of hollow towers?

LXXVI

What hope is here for modern rhyme
To him, who turns a musing eye
On songs, and deeds, and lives, that lie
Foreshorten'd in the tract of time?

These mortal lullabies of pain
May bind a book, may line a box,
May serve to curl a maiden's locks;
Or when a thousand moons shall wane

20

A man upon a stall may find,
And, passing, turn the page that tells
A grief—then changed to something else,
Sung by a long forgotten mind.

But what of that? My darken'd ways
Shall ring with music all the same;
To breathe my loss is more than fame,
To utter love more sweet than praise.

30

LXXVII

Again at Christmas did we weave
The holly round the Christmas hearth;
The silent snow possess'd the earth,
And calmly fell our Christmas-eve:

The yule-clog sparkled keen with frost;
No wing of wind the region swept;
But over all things brooding slept
The quiet sense of something lost.

As in the winters left behind,
Again our ancient games had place,
The mimic picture's breathing grace,
And dance and song and hoodman-blind.

10

Who show'd a token of distress?
No single tear, no type of pain:
O sorrow, then can sorrow wane?
O grief, can grief be changed to less?

O last regret, regret can die!
No—mixt with all this mystic frame,
Her deep relations are the same,
But with long use her tears are dry.

20

LXXVIII

"More than my brothers are to me"—
Let this not vex thee, noble heart!
I know thee of what force thou art,
To hold the costliest love in fee.

But thou and I are one in kind,
As moulded like in Nature's mint;
And hill and wood and field did print
The same sweet forms in either mind.

For us the same cold streamlet curl'd
Through all his eddying coves; the same

30

All winds that roam the twilight came
In whispers of the beauteous world.

At one dear knee we proffer'd vows,
One lesson from one book we learn'd,
Ere childhood's flaxen ringlet turn'd
To black and brown on kindred brows.

And so my wealth resembles thine,
But he was rich where I was poor,
And he supplied my want the more
As his unlikeness fitted mine.

10

LXXIX

If any vague desire should rise,
That holy Death ere Arthur died
Had moved me kindly from his side,
And dropt the dust on tearless eyes,

Then fancy shapes, as fancy can,
The grief my loss in him had wrought,
A grief as deep as life or thought,
But stay'd in peace with God and man.

I make a picture in the brain;
I hear the sentence that he speaks;
He bears the burthen of the weeks,
But turns his burthen into gain.

20

His credit thus shall set me free;
And, influence-rich to soothe and save,
Unused example from the grave
Reach out dead hands to comfort me.

LXXX

Could I have said while he was here,
"My love shall now no further range;
There cannot come a mellow change,
For now is love mature in ear."

30

Love, then, had hope of richer store:
 What end is here to my complaint?
 This haunting whisper makes me faint,
 "More years had made me love thee more."

But Death returns an answer sweet:
 "My sudden frost was sudden gain,
 And gave all ripeness to the grain
 It might have drawn from after-heat."

LXXXI

I wage not any feud with Death
 For changes wrought on form and face; 10
 No lower life than earth's embrace
 May breed with him, can fright my faith.

Eternal process moving on,
 From state to state the spirit walks;
 And these are but the shatter'd stalks
 Or ruin'd chrysalis of one.

Nor blame I Death, because he bare
 The use of virtue out of earth;
 I know transplanted human worth
 Will bloom to profit, elsewhere. 20

For this alone on Death I wreak
 The wrath that garners in my heart;
 He put our lives so far apart
 We cannot hear each other speak.

LXXXII

Dip down upon the northern shore,
 O sweet new-year delaying long;
 Thou doest expectant Nature wrong;
 Delaying long, delay no more.

What stays thee from the clouded noons,
 Thy sweetness from its proper place? 30

Can trouble live with April days,
Or sadness in the summer moons?

Bring orchis, bring the foxglove spire,
The little speedwell's darling blue,
Deep tulips dash'd with fiery dew,
Laburnums, dropping-wells of fire.

O thou new-year, delaying long,
Delayest the sorrow in my blood,
That longs to burst a frozen bud
And flood a fresher throat with song.

10

LXXXIII

When I contemplate all alone
The life that had been thine below,
And fix my thoughts on all the glow
To which thy crescent would have grown;

I see thee sitting crown'd with good,
A central warmth diffusing bliss
In glance and smile, and clasp and kiss,
On all the branches of thy blood;

Thy blood, my friend, and partly mine;
For now the day was drawing on,
When thou shouldst link thy life with one
Of mine own house, and boys of thine

20

Had babbled "Uncle" on my knee:
But that remorseless iron hour
Made cypress of her orange flower,
Despair of Hope, and earth of thee.

I seem to meet their least desire,
To clap their cheeks, to call them mine;
I see their unborn faces shine
Beside the never-lighted fire.

30

I see myself an honour'd guest,
Thy partner in the flowery walk

Of letters, genial table-talk,
Or deep dispute, and graceful jest;

While now thy prosperous labour fills
The lips of men with honest praise,
And sun by sun the happy days
Descend below the golden hills

With promise of a morn as fair;
And all the train of bounteous hours
Conduct by paths of growing powers,
To reverence and the silver hair;

10

Till slowly worn her earthly robe,
Her lavish mission richly wrought,
Leaving great legacies of thought,
Thy spirit should fail from off the globe;

What time mine own might also flee,
As link'd with thine in love and fate,
And, hovering o'er the dolorous strait
To the other shore, involved in thee,

Arrive at last the blessed goal,
And He that died in Holy Land
Would reach us out the shining hand,
And take us as a single soul.

20

What reed was that on which I leant?
Ah, backward fancy, wherefore wake
The old bitterness again, and break
The low beginnings of content.

LXXXIV

This truth came borne with bier and pall,
I felt it, when I sorrow'd most,
'Tis better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all —

30

O true in word, and tried in deed,
Demanding, so to bring relief

To this which is our common grief,
What kind of life is that I lead;

And whether trust in things above,
Be dimm'd of sorrow, or sustain'd;
And whether love for him have drain'd
My capabilities of love;

Your words have virtue such as draws
A faithful answer from the breast,
Through light reproaches, half exprest,
And loyal unto kindly laws.

10

My blood an even tenor kept,
Till on mine ear this message falls,
That in Vienna's fatal walls
God's finger touch'd him, and he slept.

The great Intelligences fair
That range above our mortal state,
In circle round the blessed gate,
Received and gave him welcome there;

And led him through the blissful climes,
And show'd him in the fountain fresh
All knowledge that the sons of flesh
Shall gather in the cycled times.

20

But I remain'd, whose hopes were dim,
Whose life, whose thoughts were little worth,
To wander on a darken'd earth,
Where all things round me breathed of him.

O friendship, equal-poised control,
O heart, with kindest motion warm,
O sacred essence, other form,
O solemn ghost! O crowned soul!

30

Yet none could better know than I,
How much of act at human hands
The sense of human will demands
By which we dare to live or die.

Whatever way my days decline,
I felt and feel, though left alone,
His being working in mine own,
The footsteps of his life in mine;

A life that all the Muses deck'd
With gifts of grace, that might express
All-comprehensive tenderness,
All-subtilizing intellect:

And so my passion hath not swerved
To works of weakness, but I find
An image comforting the mind,
And in my grief a strength reserved. 10

Likewise the imaginative woe,
That loved to handle spiritual strife,
Diffused the shock through all my life,
But in the present broke the blow.

My pulses therefore beat again
For other friends that once I met;
Nor can it suit me to forget
The mighty hopes that make us men. 20

I woo your love: I count it crime
To mourn for any overmuch—
I, the divided half of such
A friendship as had master'd Time;

Which masters Time indeed, and is
Eternal, separate from fears.
The all-assuming months and years
Can take no part away from this: ♀

But Summer on the steaming floods,
And Spring that swells the narrow brooks, 30
And Autumn, with a noise of rooks,
That gather in the waning woods,

And every pulse of wind and wave
Recalls, in change of light or gloom,

My old affection of the tomb,
And my prime passion in the grave:

My old affection of the tomb,
A part of stillness, yearns to speak:
"Arise, and get thee forth and seek
A friendship for the years to come.

"I watch thee from the quiet shore;
Thy spirit up to mine can reach;
But in dear words of human speech
We two communicate no more."

10

And I, "Can clouds of nature stain
The starry clearness of the free?
How is it? Canst thou feel for me
Some painless sympathy with pain?"

And lightly does the whisper fall;
" 'Tis hard for thee to fathom this;
I triumph in conclusive bliss,
And that serene result of all."

So hold I commerce with the dead;
Or so methinks the dead would say;
Or so shall grief with symbols play,
And pining life be fancy-fed.

20

Now looking to some settled end,
That these things pass, and I shall prove
A meeting somewhere, love with love,
I crave your pardon, O my friend;

If not so fresh, with love as true,
I, clasping brother-hands, aver
I could not, if I would, transfer
The whole I felt for him to you.

30

For which be they that hold apart
The promise of the golden hours?
First love, first friendship, equal powers
That marry with the virgin heart.

Still mine that cannot but deplore,
That beats within a lonely place,
That yet remembers his embrace,
But at his footstep leaps no more,

My heart, though widow'd, may not rest
Quite in the love of what is gone,
But seeks to beat in time with one
That warms another living breast.

Ah, take the imperfect gift I bring,
Knowing the primrose yet is dear,
The primrose of the later year,
As not unlike to that of Spring. 10

LXXXV

Sweet after showers, ambrosial air,
That rollest from the gorgeous gloom
Of evening over brake and bloom
And meadow, slowly breathing bare

The round of space, and rapt below
Through all the dewy-tassell'd wood,
And shadowing down the horned flood
In ripples, fan my brows and blow 20

The fever from my cheek, and sigh
The full new life that feeds thy breath
Throughout my frame, till Doubt and Death,
Ill brethren, let the fancy fly

From belt to belt of crimson seas
On leagues of odour streaming far,
To where in yonder orient star
A hundred spirits whisper "Peace."

LXXXVI

I pass'd beside the reverend walls
In which of old I wore the gown; 30

I roved at random through the town,
And saw the tumult of the halls ;

And heard once more in college fanes
The storm their high-built organs make,
And thunder-music, rolling, shake
The prophets blazon'd on the panes ;

And caught once more the distant shout,
The measured pulse of racing oars
Among the willows ; paced the shores
And many a bridge, and all about

10

The same gray flats again, and felt
The same, but not the same ; and last
Up that long walk of limes I pass'd
To see the rooms in which he dwelt.

Another name was on the door :
I linger'd ; all within was noise
Of songs, and clapping hands, and boys
That crash'd the glass and beat the floor ;

Where once we held debate, a band
Of youthful friends, on mind and art,
And labour, and the changing mart,
And all the framework of the land ;

20

When one would aim an arrow fair,
But send it slackly from the string ;
And one would pierce an outer ring,
And one an inner, here and there ;

And last the master-bowman, he,
Would cleave the mark. A willing ear
We lent him. Who, but hung to hear
The rapt oration flowing free

30

From point to point, with power and grace,
And music in the bounds of law,
To those conclusions when we saw
The God within him light his face,

And seem to lift the form, and glow
In azure orbits heavenly-wise;
And over those ethereal eyes
The bar of Michael Angelo.

LXXXVII

Wild bird, whose warble, liquid sweet,
Rings Eden through the budded quicks,
O tell me where the senses mix,
O tell me where the passions meet,

Whence radiate: fierce extremes employ
Thy spirits in the dusking leaf,
And in the midmost of heart of grief
Thy passion clasps a secret joy:

10

And I—my harp would prelude woe—
I cannot all command the strings;
The glory of the sum of things
Will flash along the chords and go.

LXXXVIII

Witch-elms that countercharge the floor
Of this flat lawn with dusk and bright:
And thou, with all thy breadth and height
Of foliage, towering sycamore;

20

How often, hither wandering down,
My Arthur found your shadows fair,
And shook to all the liberal air
The dust and din and steam of town:

He brought an eye for all he saw;
He mixt in all our simple sports;
They pleased him, fresh from brawling courts
And dusky purlieus of the law.

O joy to him in this retreat,
Immantled in ambrosial dark,

30

To drink the cooler air, and mark
The landscape winking through the heat:

O sound to rout the brood of cares,
The sweep of scythe in morning dew,
The gust that round the garden flew,
And tumbled half the mellowing pears!

O bliss, when all in circle drawn
About him, heart and ear were fed
To hear him, as he lay and read
The Tuscan poets on the lawn:

10

Or in the all-golden afternoon
A guest, or happy sister, sung,
Or here she brought the harp and flung
A ballad to the brightening moon:

Nor less it pleased in livelier moods,
Beyond the bounding hill to stray,
And break the livelong summer day
With banquet in the distant woods;

Whereat we glanced from theme to theme,
Discuss'd the books to love or hate,
Or touch'd the changes of the state,
Or threaded some Socratic dream;

20

But if I praised the busy town,
He loved to rail against it still,
For "Ground in yonder social mill
We rub each other's angles down,

"And merge," he said, "in form and gloss
The picturesque of man and man."
We talk'd: the stream beneath us ran;
The wine-flask lying couch'd in moss,

30

Or cool'd within the glooming wave;
And last, returning from afar,
Before the crimson-circled star
Had fall'n into her father's grave,

And brushing ankle-deep in flowers,
We heard behind the woodbine veil
The milk that bubbled in the pail,
And buzzings of the honied hours.

LXXXIX

He tasted love with half his mind,
Nor ever drank the inviolate spring
Where nighest heaven, who first could fling
This bitter seed among mankind;

That could the dead, whose dying eyes
Were closed with wail, resume their life, 10
They would but find in child and wife
An iron welcome when they rise:

'Twas well, indeed, when warm with wine,
To pledge them with a kindly tear:
To talk them o'er, to wish them here,
To count their memories half divine;

But if they came who pass'd away,
Behold their brides in other hands;
The hard heir strides about their lands,
And will not yield them for a day. 20

Yea, though their sons were none of these,
Not less the yet-loved sire would make
Confusion worse than death, and shake
The pillars of domestic peace.

Ah dear, but come thou back to me:
Whatever change the years have wrought,
I find not yet one lonely thought
That cries against my wish for thee.

XC

When rosy plumelets tuft the larch,
And rarely pipes the mounted thrush; 30

Or underneath the barren bush
Flits by the sea-blue bird of March;

Come, wear the form by which I know
Thy spirit in time among thy peers;
The hope of unaccomplish'd years
Be large and lucid round thy brow.

When summer's hourly-mellowing change
May breathe, with many roses sweet,
Upon the thousand waves of wheat
That ripple round the lonely grange;

10

Come: not in watches of the night,
But where the sunbeam broodeth warm,
Come, beauteous in thine after-form,
And like a finer light in light.

XCI

If any vision should reveal
Thy likeness, I might count it vain
As but the canker of the brain;
Yea, though it spake and made appeal

To chances where our lots were cast
Together in the days behind,
I might but say, I hear a wind
Of memory murmuring the past.

20

Yea, though it spake and bared to view
A fact within the coming year;
And though the months, revolving near,
Should prove the phantom-warning true,

They might not seem thy prophecies,
But spiritual presentiments,
And such refraction of events
As often rises ere they rise.

30

XCII

I shall not see thee. Dare I say
 No spirit ever brake the band
 That stays him from the native land,
Where first he walk'd when claspt in clay?

No visual shade of some one lost,
 But he, the Spirit himself, may come
 Where all the nerve of sense is numb;
Spirit to Spirit, Ghost to Ghost.

O therefore from thy sightless range
 With gods in unconjectured bliss,
 O, from the distance of the abyss
Of tenfold-complicated change, 10

Descend, and touch, and enter; hear
 The wish too strong for words to name;
 That in this blindness of the frame
My Ghost may feel that thine is near.

XCIII

How pure at heart and sound in head,
 With what divine affections bold
 Should be the man whose thought would hold
An hour's communion with the dead. 20

In vain shalt thou, or any, call
 The spirits from their golden day,
 Except, like them, thou too canst say
My spirit is at peace with all.

They haunt the silence of the breast,
 Imaginations calm and fair,
 The memory like a cloudless air,
The conscience as a sea at rest:

But when the heart is full of din,
 And doubt beside the portal waits, 30

They can but listen at the gates,
And hear the household jar within.

XCIV

By night we linger'd on the lawn,
For underfoot the herb was dry;
And genial warmth; and o'er the sky
The silvery haze of summer drawn;

And calm that let the tapers burn
Unwavering: not a cricket chirr'd:
The brook alone far-off was heard
And on the board the fluttering urn:

10

And bats went round in fragrant skies,
And wheel'd or lit the filmy shapes
That haunt the dusk, with ermine capes
And woolly breasts and beaded eyes;

While now we sang old songs that peal'd
From knoll to knoll, where, couch'd at ease,
The white kine glimmer'd, and the trees
Laid their dark arms about the field.

But when those others, one by one,
Withdrew themselves from me and night,
And in the house light after light
Went out, and I was all alone,

20

A hunger seized my heart; I read
Of that glad year which once had been,
In those fall'n leaves which kept their green,
The noble letters of the dead:

And strangely on the silence broke
The silent-speaking words, and strange
Was love's dumb cry defying change
To test his worth; and strangely spoke

30

The faith, the vigour, bold to dwell
On doubts that drive the coward back,

And keen through wordy snares to track
Suggestion to her inmost cell.

So word by word, and line by line,
The dead man touch'd me from the past,
And all at once it seem'd at last
His living soul was flash'd on mine,

And mine in his was wound, and whirl'd
About empyreal heights of thought,
And came on that which is, and caught
The deep pulsations of the world,

10

Æonian music measuring out
The steps of Time—the shocks of Chance—
The blows of Death. At length my trance
Was cancell'd, stricken through with doubt.

Vague words! but ah, how hard to frame
In matter-moulded forms of speech,
Or ev'n for intellect to reach
Through memory that which I became:

Till now the doubtful dusk reveal'd
The knolls once more where, couch'd at ease,
The white kine glimmer'd, and the trees
Laid their dark arms about the field:

20

And suck'd from out the distant gloom
A breeze began to tremble o'er
The large leaves of the sycamore,
And fluctuate all the still perfume;

And gathering freshlier overhead,
Rock'd the full-foliaged elms, and swung
The heavy-folded rose, and flung
The lilies to and fro, and said,

30

“The dawn, the dawn,” and died away;
And East and West, without a breath,
Mix'd their dim lights, like life and death,
To broaden into boundless day.

XCV

You say, but with no touch of scorn,
Sweet-hearted, you, whose light-blue eyes
Are tender over drowning flies,
You tell me, doubt is Devil-born.

I know not: one indeed I knew
In many a subtle question versed,
Who touch'd a jarring lyre at first,
But ever strove to make it true:

Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out. 10
There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts, and gather'd strength;
He would not make his judgment blind;
He faced the spectres of the mind,
And laid them: thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own;
And Power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone, 20

But in the darkness and the cloud,
As over Sinai's peaks of old,
While Israel made their gods of gold,
Although the trumpet blew so loud.

XCVI

My love has talk'd with rocks and trees;
He finds on misty mountain-ground
His own vast shadow glory-crown'd;
He sees himself in all he sees.

Two partners of a married life—
I look'd on these, and thought of thee 30

In vastness and in mystery,
And of my spirit as of a wife.

These two—they dwelt with eye on eye,
Their hearts of old have beat in tune,
Their meetings made December June,
Their every parting was to die.

Their love has never pass'd away;
The days she never can forget
Are earnest that he loves her yet,
Whate'er the faithless people say.

10

Her life is lone; he sits apart;
He loves her yet; she will not weep;
Though rapt in matters dark and deep,
He seems to slight her simple heart.

He thrids the labyrinth of the mind,
He reads the secret of the star,
He seems so near and yet so far,
He looks so cold: she thinks him kind.

She keeps the gift of years before,
A wither'd violet is her bliss;
She knows not what his greatness is;
For that, for all, she loves him more.

20

For him she plays, to him she sings
Of early faith and plighted vows;
She knows but matters of the house,
And he, he knows a thousand things.

Her faith is fix'd and cannot move,
She darkly feels him great and wise,
She dwells on him with faithful eyes,
"I cannot understand: I love."

30

XCVII

You leave us: you will see the Rhine,
And those fair hills I sail'd below,

When I was there with him ; and go
By summer belts of wheat and vine

To where he breathed his latest breath,
That City. All her splendour seems
No livelier than the wisp that gleams
On Lethe in the eyes of Death.

Let her great Danube rolling fair
Enwind her isles, unmark'd of me :
I have not seen, I will not see
Vienna ; rather dream that there,

10

A treble darkness, evil haunts
The birth, the bridal ; friend from friend
Is oftener parted, fathers bend
Above more graves, a thousand wants

Gnarr at the heels of men, and prey
By each cold hearth, and sadness flings
Her shadow on the blaze of kings :
And yet myself have heard him say,

That not in any mother town
With statelier progress to and fro
The double tides of chariots flow
By park and suburb under brown

20

Of lustier leaves ; nor more content,
He told me, lives in any crowd,
When all is gay with lamps, and loud
With sport and song, in booth and tent,

Imperial halls, or open plain ;
And wheels the circled dance, and breaks
The rocket molten into flakes
Of crimson or in emerald rain.

30

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,
So loud with voices of the birds,

So thick with lowings of the herds,
Day, when I lost the flower of men;

Who tremblest through thy darkling red
On yon swoll'n brook that bubbles fast
By meadows breathing of the past,
And woodlands holy to the dead;

Who murmurest in the foliaged eaves
A song that slights the coming care,
And Autumn laying here and there
A fiery finger on the leaves;

10

Who wakenest with thy balmy breath
To myriads on the genial earth,
Memories of bridal, or of birth,
And unto myriads more, of death.

Oh, wheresoever those may be,
Betwixt the slumber of the poles,
To-day they count as kindred souls;
They know me not, but mourn with me.

XCIX

I wake, I rise: from end to end
Of all the landscape underneath
I find no place that does not breathe
Some gracious memory of my friend.

20

No gray old grange, or lonely fold,
Or low morass and whispering reed,
Or simple stile from mead to mead,
Or sheepwalk up the windy wold;

Nor hoary knoll of ash and haw,
That hears the latest linnet trill;
Nor quarry trench'd along the hill,
And haunted by the wrangling daw;

30

Nor runlet tinkling from the rock;
Nor pastoral rivulet that swerves

To left and right through meadowy curves,
That feed the mothers of the flock,—

But each has pleased a kindred eye,
And each reflects a kindlier day;
And, leaving these, to pass away,
I think once more he seems to die.

C

Unwatch'd, the garden bough shall sway,
The tender blossom flutter down;
Unloved, that beech will gather brown,
This maple burn itself away;

10

Unloved, the sunflower, shining fair,
Ray round with flames her disk of seed,
And many a rose-carnation feed
With summer spice the humming air;

Unloved, by many a sandy bar
The brook shall babble down the plain,
At noon, or when the lesser wain
Is twisting round the polar star;

Uncared for, gird the windy grove,
And flood the haunts of hern and crake;
Or into silver arrows break
The sailing moon in creek and cove;—

20

Till from the garden and the wild
A fresh association blow,
And year by year the landscape grow
Familiar to the stranger's child;

As year by year the labourer tills
His wonted glebe, or lops the glades;
And year by year our memory fades
From all the circle of the hills.

30

CI

We leave the well-beloved place
Where first we gazed upon the sky;
The roofs that heard our earliest cry
Will shelter one of stranger race.

We go, but ere we go from home,
As down the garden-walks I move,
Two spirits of a diverse love
Contend for loving masterdom.

One whispers, "Here thy boyhood sung
Long since its matin song, and heard
The low love-language of the bird
In native hazels tassel-hung." 10

The other answers, "Yea, but here
Thy feet have stray'd in after-hours
With thy lost friend among the bowers,
And this hath made them trebly dear."

These two have striven half the day,
And each prefers his separate claim,
Poor rivals in a losing game,
That will not yield each other way. 20

I turn to go: my feet are set
To leave the pleasant fields and farms;
They mix in one another's arms
To one pure image of regret.

CII

On that last night before we went
From out the doors where I was bred,
I dream'd a vision of the dead,
Which left my after-morn content.

Methought I dwelt within a hall,
And maidens with me: distant hills 30

From hidden summits fed with rills
A river sliding by the wall.

The hall with harp and carol rang :
They sang of what is wise and good
And graceful. In the centre stood
A statue veil'd, to which they sang ;

And which, though veil'd, was known to me
The shape of him I loved, and love
For ever : then flew in a dove
And brought a summons from the sea :

10

And when they learnt that I must go
They wept and wail'd, but led the way
To where a little shallop lay
At anchor in the flood below ;

And on by many a level mead,
And shadowing bluff that made the banks,
We glided, winding under ranks
Of iris and the golden reed ;

And still as vaster grew the shore,
And roll'd the floods in grander space,
The maidens gather'd strength and grace
And presence, lordlier than before ;

20

And I myself, who sat apart
And watch'd them, wax'd in every limb ;
I felt the thews of Anakim,
The pulses of a Titan's heart,

As one would sing the death of war,
And one would chant the history
Of that great race, which is to be,
And one the shaping of a star ;

30

Until the forward-creeping tides
Began to foam, and we to draw
From deep to deep, to where we saw
A great ship lift her shining sides.

The man we loved was there on deck,
But thrice as large as man he bent
To greet us. Up the side I went,
And fell in silence on his neck:

Whereat those maidens with one mind
Bewail'd their lot; I did them wrong:
"We served thee here," they said, "so long,
And wilt thou leave us now behind?"

So rapt I was, they could not win
An answer from my lips, but he
Replying, "Enter likewise ye
And go with us:" they enter'd in. 10

And while the wind began to sweep
A music out of sheet and shroud,
We steer'd her toward a crimson cloud
That landlike slept along the deep.

CIII

The time draws near the birth of Christ:
The moon is hid, the night is still;
A single church below the hill
Is pealing, folded in the mist— 20

A single peal of bells below,
That wakens at this hour of rest
A single murmur in the breast,
That these are not the bells I know.

Like strangers' voices here they sound,
In lands where not a memory strays.
Nor landmark breathes of other days,
But all is new unhallow'd ground.

CIV

This holly by the cottage-eave,
To-night, ungather'd, shall it stand: 30

We live within the stranger's land,
And strangely falls our Christmas-eve.

Our father's dust is left alone
And silent under other snows;
There in due time the woodbine blows,
The violet comes, but we are gone.

No more shall wayward grief abuse
The genial hour with mask and mime;
For change of place, like growth of time,
Has broke the bond of dying use.

10

Let cares that petty shadows cast,
By which our lives are chiefly proved,
A little spare the night I loved,
And hold it solemn to the past.

But let no footstep beat the floor,
Nor bowl of wassail mantle warm;
For who would keep an ancient form
Through which the spirit breathes no more?

Be neither song, nor game, nor feast,
Nor harp be touch'd, nor flute be blown;
No dance, no motion, save alone
What lightens in the lucid east

20

Of rising worlds by yonder wood.
Long sleeps the summer in the seed;
Run out your measured arcs, and lead
The closing cycle rich in good.

CV

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

30

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:

The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

10

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease,
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

20

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

CVI

It is the day when he was born,
A bitter day that early sank
Behind a purple-frosty bank
Of vapour, leaving night forlorn.

30

The time admits not flowers or leaves
To deck the banquet; fiercely flies

The blast of North and East, and ice
Makes daggers at the sharpen'd eaves,

And bristles all the brakes and thorns
To yon hard crescent, as she hangs
Above the wood which grides and clangs
Its leafless ribs and iron horns

Together, in the drifts that pass
To darken on the rolling brine
That breaks the coast. But fetch the wine,
Arrange the board, and brim the glass;

10

Bring in great logs and let them lie,
To make a solid core of heat;
Be cheerful-minded, talk and treat
Of all things ev'n as he were by:

We keep the day. With festal cheer,
With books and music, surely we
Will drink to him, whate'er he be,
And sing the songs he loved to hear.

CVII

I will not shut me from my kind;
And, lest I stiffen into stone,
I will not eat my heart alone,
Nor feed with sighs a passing wind:

20

What profit lies in barren faith,
And vacant yearning, though with might
To scale the heaven's highest height,
Or dive below the wells of Death?

What find I in the highest place,
But mine own phantom chanting hymns?
And on the depths of death there swims
The reflex of a human face.

30

I'll rather take what fruit may be
Of sorrow under human skies:

'Tis held that sorrow makes us wise,
Whatever wisdom sleep with thee.

CVIII

Heart-affluence in discursive talk
From household fountains never dry;
The critic clearness of an eye,
That saw through all the Muses' walk;

Seraphic intellect and force
To seize and throw the doubts of man;
Impassion'd logic, which outran
The hearer in its fiery course;

10

High nature amorous of the good,
But touch'd with no ascetic gloom;
And passion pure in snowy bloom
Through all the years of April blood;

A love of freedom rarely felt,
Of freedom in her regal seat
Of England, not the schoolboy heat,
The blind hysterics of the Celt;

And manhood fused with female grace
In such a sort, the child would twine
A trustful hand, unask'd, in thine,
And find his comfort in thy face;—

20

All these have been, and thee mine eyes
Have look'd on: if they look'd in vain,
My shame is greater who remain,
Nor let thy wisdom make me wise.

CIX

Thy converse drew us with delight,
The men of rathe and riper years;
The feeble soul, a haunt of fears,
Forgot his weakness in thy sight.

30

On thee the loyal-hearted hung;
The proud was half disarm'd of pride;
Nor cared the serpent at thy side
To flicker with his treble tongue.

The stern were mild when thou wert by;
The flippant put himself to school
And heard thee; and the brazen fool
Was soften'd, and he knew not why;

While I, thy dearest, sat apart,
And felt thy triumph was as mine,
And loved them more that they were thine,
The graceful tact, the Christian art:

10

Not mine the sweetness, or the skill,
But mine the love that will not tire,
And, born of love, the vague desire
That spurs an imitative will.

CX

The churl in spirit, up or down
Along the scale of ranks, through all,
To who may grasp a golden ball,
By blood a king, at heart a clown;

20

The churl in spirit, howe'er he veil
His want in forms for fashion's sake,
Will let his coltish nature break
At seasons through the gilded pale:

For who can always act? but he,
To whom a thousand memories call,
Not being less but more than all
The gentleness he seem'd to be;

So wore his outward best, and join'd
Each office of the social hour
To noble manners, as the flower
And native growth of noble mind;

30

Nor ever narrowness or spite,
Or villain fancy fleeting by,
Drew in the expression of an eye
Where God and Nature met in light:

And thus he bore without abuse
The grand old name of gentleman,
Defamed by every charlatan,
And soil'd with all ignoble use.

CXI

High wisdom holds my wisdom less
That I, who gaze with temperate eyes 10
On glorious insufficiencies,
Set light by narrower perfectness.

But thou, that fillest all the room
Of all my love, art reason why
I seem to cast a careless eye
On souls, the lesser lords of doom.

For what wert thou? some novel power
Sprang up for ever at a touch,
And hope could never hope too much, 20
In watching thee from hour to hour.

Large elements in order brought,
And tracts of calm from tempest made,
And world-wide fluctuation sway'd
In vassal tides that follow'd thought.

CXII

'Tis held that sorrow makes us wise;
Yet how much wisdom sleeps with thee
Which not alone had guided me,
But served the seasons that may rise;

For can I doubt, who knew thee keen
In intellect, with force and skill

To strive, to fashion, to fulfil—
I doubt not what thou wouldst have been:

A life in civic action warm,
A soul on highest mission sent,
A potent voice of Parliament,
A pillar steadfast in the storm,

Should licensed boldness gather force,
Becoming, when the time has birth,
A lever to uplift the earth
And roll it in another course,

10

With many shocks that come and go,
With agonies, with energies,
With overthrowings, and with cries,
And undulations to and fro.

CXIII

Who loves not Knowledge? Who shall rail
Against her beauty? May she mix
With men and prosper? Who shall fix
Her pillars? Let her work prevail.

But on her forehead sits a fire:
She sets her forward countenance
And leaps into the future chance,
Submitting all things to desire.

20

Half-grown as yet, a child, and vain,
She cannot fight the fear of death.
What is she, cut from love and faith,
But some wild Pallas from the brain

Of Demons? fiery-hot to burst
All barriers in her onward race
For power. Let her know her place:
She is the second, not the first.

30

A higher hand must make her mild,
If all be not in vain; and guide

Her footsteps, moving side by side
With Wisdom, like the younger child:

For she is earthly of the mind,
But Wisdom heavenly of the soul.
O friend, who camest to thy goal
So early, leaving me behind,

I would the great world grew like thee,
Who grewest not alone in power
And knowledge, but from hour to hour
In reverence and in charity.

10

CXIV

Now fades the last long streak of snow,
Now burgeons every maze of quick
About the flowering squares, and thick
By ashen roots the violets blow.

Now rings the woodland loud and long,
The distance takes a lovelier hue,
And drown'd in yonder living blue
The lark becomes a sightless song.

Now dance the lights on lawn and lea,
The flocks are whiter down the vale,
And milkier every milky sail
On winding stream or distant sea;

20

Where now the sea-mew pipes, or dives
In yonder greening gleam, and fly
The happy birds, that change their sky
To build and brood, that live their lives

From land to land: and in my breast
Spring wakens too; and my regret
Becomes an April violet,
And buds and blossoms like the rest.

30

CXV

Is it, then, regret for buried time
That keenlier in sweet April wakes,
And meets the year, and gives and takes
The colours of the crescent prime?

Not all: the songs, the stirring air,
The life re-orient out of dust,
Cry through the sense to hearten trust
In that which made the world so fair.

Not all regret: the face will shine
Upon me, while I muse alone;
The dear, dear voice that I have known
Will speak to me of me and mine:

10

Yet less of sorrow lives in me
For days of happy commune dead;
Less yearning for the friendship fled,
Than some strong bond which is to be.

CXVI

O days and hours, your work is this,
To hold me from my proper place,
A little while from his embrace,
For fuller gain of after bliss:

20

That out of distance might ensue
Desire of nearness doubly sweet;
And unto meeting, when we meet,
Delight a hundredfold accrue,

For every grain of sand that runs,
And every span of shade that steals,
And every kiss of toothèd wheels,
And all the courses of the suns.

CXVII

Contemplate all this work of Time,
The giant labouring in his youth;
Nor dream of human love and truth,
As dying Nature's earth and lime;

But trust that those we call the dead
Are breathers of an ampler day
For ever nobler ends. They say
The solid earth whereon we tread

In tracts of fluent heat began,
And grew to seeming-random forms, 16
The seeming prey of cyclic storms,
Till at the last arose the man;

Who throve and branch'd from clime to clime,
The herald of a higher race,
And of himself in higher place,
If so he type this work of time

Within himself, from more to more,
Or, crown'd with attributes of woe
Like glories, move his course, and show 20
That life is not as idle ore,

But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And batter'd with the shocks of doom

To shape and use. Arise, and fly
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;
Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.

CXVIII

Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, not as one that weeps 30

I come once more: the city sleeps;
I smell the meadow in the street;

I hear a chirp of birds; I see
 Betwixt the black fronts long-withdrawn
 A light-blue lane of early dawn,
And think of early days and thee,

And bless thee, for thy lips are bland,
 And bright the friendship of thine eye;
 And in my thoughts with scarce a sigh
I take the pressure of thine hand.

10

CXIX

I trust I have not wasted breath:
 I think we are not wholly brain,
 Magnetic mockeries; not in vain,
Like Paul with beasts, I fought with Death;

Not only cunning casts in clay:
 Let Science prove we are, and then
 What matters Science unto men,
At least to me? I would not stay.

Let him, the wiser man who springs
 Hereafter, up from childhood shape
 His action like the greater ape,
But I was born to other things.

20

CXX

Sad Hesper o'er the buried sun
 And ready, thou, to die with him,
 Thou watchest all things ever dim
And dimmer, and a glory done:

The team is loosen'd from the wain,
 The boat is drawn upon the shore
 Thou listenest to the closing door,
And life is darken'd in the brain.

30

Bright Phosphor, fresher for the night,
By thee the world's great work is heard
Beginning, and the wakeful bird;
Behind thee comes the greater light:

The market boat is on the stream,
And voices hail it from the brink;
Thou hear'st the village hammer clink
And see'st the moving of the team.

Sweet Hesper-Phosphor, double name
For what is one, the first, the last,
Thou, like my present and my past,
Thy place is changed; thou art the same.

10

CXXI

Oh, wast thou with me, dearest, then,
While I rose up against my doom,
And yearn'd to burst the folded gloom,
To bare the eternal Heavens again,

To feel once more, in placid awe,
The strong imagination roll
A sphere of stars about my soul,
In all her motion one with law;

20

If thou wert with me, and the grave
Divide us not; be with me now,
And enter in at breast and brow,
Till all my blood, a fuller wave,

Be quicken'd with a livelier breath,
And like an inconsiderate boy,
As in the former flash of joy,
I slip the thoughts of life and death;

And all the breeze of Fancy blows,
And every dewdrop paints a bow;
The wizard lightnings deeply glow,
And every thought breaks out a rose.

30

CXXII

There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
O Earth, what changes hast thou seen!
There where the long street roars, hath been
The stillness of the central sea.

The hills are shadows, and they flow
From form to form, and nothing stands;
They melt like mist, the solid lands,
Like clouds they shape themselves and go.

But in my spirit will I dwell,
And dream my dream, and hold it true, 10
For though my lips may breathe adieu,
I cannot think the thing farewell.

CXXIII

That which we dare invoke to bless;
Our dearest faith; our ghastliest doubt;
He, They, One, All; within, without;
The Power in darkness whom we guess;

I found Him not in world or sun,
Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye;
Nor through the questions men may try,
The petty cobwebs we have spun: 20

If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,
I heard a voice, "Believe no more,"
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep;

A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answer'd, "I have felt."

No, like a child in doubt and fear:
But that blind clamour made me wise; 30

Then was I as a child that cries,
But, crying, knows his father near;

And what I seem beheld again
What is, and no man understands;
And out of darkness came the hands
That reach through nature, moulding men.

CXXIV

Whatever I have said or sung,
Some bitter notes my harp would give,
Yea, though there often seem'd to live
A contradiction on the tongue,

10

Yet Hope had never lost her youth;
She did but look through dimmer eyes;
Or Love but play'd with gracious lies,
Because he felt so fix'd in truth:

And if the song were full of care,
He breathed the spirit of the song;
And if the words were sweet and strong
He set his royal signet there;

Abiding with me till I sail
To seek thee on the mystic deeps,
And this electric force, that keeps
A thousand pulses dancing, fail.

20

CXXV

Love is and was my Lord and King,
And in his presence I attend
To hear the tidings of my friend,
Which every hour his couriers bring.

Love is and was my King and Lord,
And will be, though as yet I keep
Within his court on earth, and sleep
Encompass'd by his faithful guard,

30

And hear at times a sentinel
That moves about from place to place
And whispers to the vast of space
Among the worlds, that all is well.

CXXVI

And all is well, though faith and form
Be sunder'd in the night of fear;
Well roars the storm to those that hear
A deeper voice across the storm,

Proclaiming social truth shall spread,
And justice, ev'n though thrice again
The red fool-fury of the Seine
Should pile her barricades with dead.

10

But ill for him that wears a crown,
And him, the lazar, in his rags:
They tremble, the sustaining crags;
The spires of ice are toppled down,

And molten up, and roar in flood;
The fortress crashes from on high,
The brute earth lightens to the sky,
And the great Æon sinks in blood,

20

And compass'd by the fires of hell,
While thou, dear spirit, happy star
O'erlook'st the tumult from afar
And smilest, knowing all is well.

CXXVII

The love that rose on stronger wings,
Unpalsied when he met with Death,
Is comrade of the lesser faith
That sees the course of human things.

No doubt vast eddies in the flood
Of onward time shall yet be made,

30

And thronèd races may degrade;
Yet, O ye mysteries of good,

Wild Hours that fly with Hope and Fear,
If all your office had to do
With old results that look like new—
If this were all your mission here,

To draw, to sheathe a useless sword,
To fool the crowd with glorious lies,
To cleave a creed in sects and cries,
To change the bearing of a word,

10

To shift an arbitrary power,
To cramp the student at his desk,
To make old bareness picturesque
And tuft with grass a feudal tower;

Why then my scorn might well descend
On you and yours. I see in part
That all, as in some piece of art,
Is toil coöperant to an end.

CXXVIII

Dear friend, far off, my lost desire,
So far, so near in woe and weal;
Oh, loved the most when most I feel
There is a lower and a higher;

20

Known and unknown; human, divine;
Sweet human hand and lips and eye;
Dear heavenly friend that canst not die,
Mine, mine, for ever, ever mine;

Strange friend, past, present, and to be;
Loved deeplier, darklier understood;
Behold I dream a dream of good,
And mingle all the world with thee. •

30

CXXIX

Thy voice is on the rolling air;
I hear thee where the waters run;
Thou standest in the rising sun,
And in the setting thou art fair.

What art thou then? I cannot guess;
But though I seem in star and flower
To feel thee some diffusive power,
I do not therefore love thee less:

My love involves the love before;
My love is vaster passion now;
Though mix'd with God and Nature thou,
I seem to love thee more and more. 10

Far off thou art, but ever nigh;
I have thee still, and I rejoice;
I prosper, circled with thy voice;
I shall not lose thee though I die.

CXXX

O living will that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock,
Rise in the spiritual rock,
Flow through our deeds and make them pure, 20

That we may lift from out of dust
A voice as unto him that hears,
A cry above the conquer'd years
To one that with us works; and trust,

With faith that comes of self-control,
The truths that never can be proved
Until we close with all we loved,
And all we flow from, soul in soul.

O true and tried, so well and long,
Demand not thou a marriage lay;
In that it is thy marriage day
Is music more than any song.

Nor have I felt so much of bliss
Since first he told me that he loved
A daughter of our house; nor proved
Since that dark day a day like this,

Though I since then have number'd o'er
Some thrice three years: they went and came, 10
Remade the blood and changed the frame,
And yet is love not less, but more;

No longer caring to embalm
In dying songs a dead regret,
But like a statue solid-set,
And moulded in colossal calm.

Regret is dead, but love is more
Than in the summers that are flown,
For I myself with these have grown
To something greater than before; 20

Which makes appear the songs I made
As echoes out of weaker times,
As half but idle brawling rhymes,
The sport of random sun and shade.

But where is she, the bridal flower,
That must be made a wife ere noon?
She enters, glowing like the moon
Of Eden on its bridal bower:

On me she bends her blissful eyes
And then on thee; they meet thy look 30
And brighten like the star that shook
Betwixt the palms of paradise.

Oh, when her life was yet in bud,
He too foretold the perfect rose.

For thee she grew, for thee she grows
For ever, and as fair as good.

And thou art worthy; full of power;
As gentle; liberal-minded, great,
Consistent; wearing all that weight
Of learning lightly like a flower.

But now set out: the noon is near,
And I must give away the bride;
She fears not, or with thee beside
And me behind her, will not fear:

10

For I that danc'd her on my knee,
That watch'd her on her nurse's arm,
That shielded all her life from harm
At last must part with her to thee;

Now waiting to be made a wife,
Her feet, my darling, on the dead;
Their pensive tablets round her head,
And the most living words of life

Breathed in her ear. The ring is on,
The "wilt thou" answer'd, and again
The "wilt thou" ask'd, till out of twain
Her sweet "I will" has made ye one.

20

Now sign your names, which shall be read,
Mute symbols of a joyful morn,
By village eyes as yet unborn:
The names are sign'd, and overhead

Begins the clash and clang that tells
The joy to every wandering breeze;
The blind wall rocks, and on the trees
The dead leaf trembles to the bells.

30

O happy hour! and happier hours
Await them. Many a merry face
Salutes them—maidens of the place,
That pelt us in the porch with flowers.

O happy hour! behold the bride
 With him to whom her hand I gave.
 They leave the porch, they pass the grave
 That has to-day its sunny side.

To-day the grave is bright for me;
For them the light of life increased,
Who stay to share the morning feast,
Who rest to-night beside the sea.

Let all my genial spirits advance
To meet and greet a whiter sun ;
My drooping memory will not shun
The foaming grape of eastern France.

It circles round, and fancy plays,
And hearts are warm'd and faces bloom,
As drinking health to bride and groom
We wish them store of happy days.

Nor count me all to blame if I
 Conjecture of a stiller guest,
 Perchance, perchance, among the rest,
 And, though in silence, wishing joy. 20

But they must go, the time draws on,
And those white-favour'd horses wait;
They rise, but linger; it is late:
Farewell! we kiss, and they are gone.

A shade falls on us, like the dark
From little cloudlets on the grass;
But sweeps away as out we pass
To range the woods, to roam the park,

Discussing how their courtship grew,
And talk of others that are wed,
And how she look'd, and what he said;
And back we come at fall of dew.

Again the feast, the speech, the glee,
The shade of passing thought, the wealth

Of words and wit, the double health,
The crowning cup, the three times three,

And last the dance;—till I retire:
Dumb is that tower which spake so loud,
And high in heaven the streaming cloud,
And on the downs a rising fire:

And rise, O moon, from yonder down,
Till over down and over dale
All night the shining vapour sail
And pass the silent-lighted town,

10

The white-faced halls, the glancing rills,
And catch at every mountain head,
And o'er the friths that branch and spread
Their sleeping silver through the hills;

And touch with shade the bridal doors,
With tender gloom the roof, the wall;
And breaking, let the splendour fall
To spangle all the happy shores

By which they rest, and ocean sounds,
And, star and system rolling past,
A soul shall draw from out the vast
And strike his being into bounds,

20

And, moved through life of lower phase,
Result in man, be born and think,
And act and love, a closer link
Betwixt us and the crowning race

Of those that, eye to eye, shall look
On knowledge; under whose command
Is Earth and Earth's, and in their hand
Is Nature like an open book;

30

No longer half-akin to brute,
For all we thought, and loved, and did,
And hoped, and suffer'd, is but seed
Of what in them is flower and fruit;

ODE ON DEATH OF WELLINGTON 245

Whereof the man, that with me trod
This planet, was a noble type
Appearing ere the times were ripe,
That friend of mine who lives in God—

That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

ODE ON THE DEATH OF THE DUKE OF
WELLINGTON

I

Bury the Great Duke
With an empire's lamentation, 10
Let us bury the Great Duke
To the noise of the mourning of a mighty nation,
Mourning when their leaders fall,
Warriors carry the warrior's pall,
And sorrow darkens hamlet and hall.

II

Where shall we lay the man whom we deplore?
Here, in streaming London's central roar.
Let the sound of those he wrought for,
And the feet of those he fought for,
Echo round his bones for evermore. 20

III

Lead out the pageant: sad and slow,
As fits an universal woe,
Let the long long procession go,
And let the sorrowing crowd about it grow,
And let the mournful martial music blow;
The last great Englishman is low.

IV

Mourn, for to us he seems the last,
 Remembering all his greatness in the Past.
 No more in soldier fashion will he greet
 With lifted hand the gazer in the street.
 O friends, our chief state-oracle is mute:
 Mourn for the man of long-enduring blood,
 The statesman-warrior, moderate, resolute,
 Whole in himself, a common good.
 Mourn for the man of amplest influence,
 Yet clearest of ambitious crime, 10
 Our greatest yet with least pretence,
 Great in council and great in war,
 Foremost captain of his time,
 Rich in saving common-sense,
 And, as the greatest only are,
 In his simplicity sublime.
 O good gray head which all men knew,
 O voice from which their omens all men drew,
 O iron nerve to true occasion true, 20
 O fall'n at length that tower of strength
 Which stood four-square to all the winds that blew!
 Such was he whom we deplore.
 The long self-sacrifice of life is o'er.
 The great World-victor's victor will be seen no more.

V

All is over and done:
 Render thanks to the Giver,
 England, for thy son.
 Let the bell be toll'd.
 Render thanks to the Giver,
 And render him to the mould. 30
 Under the cross of gold
 That shines over city and river,
 There he shall rest for ever
 Among the wise and the bold.
 Let the bell be toll'd:
 And a reverent people behold

The towering car, the sable steeds:
 Bright let it be with his blazon'd deeds,
 Dark in its funeral fold.
 Let the bell be toll'd:
 And a deeper knell in the heart be knoll'd;
 And the sound of the sorrowing anthem roll'd
 Through the dome of the golden cross;
 And the volleying cannon thunder his loss;
 He knew their voices of old.
 For many a time in many a clime 10
 His captain's ear has heard them boom
 Bellowing victory, bellowing doom:
 When he with those deep voices wrought,
 Guarding realms and kings from shame;
 With those deep voices our dead captain taught
 The tyrant, and asserts his claim
 In that dread sound to the great name,
 Which he has worn so pure of blame,
 In praise and in dispraise the same,
 A man of well-attemper'd frame. 20
 O civic muse, to such a name,
 To such a name for ages long,
 To such a name,
 Preserve a broad approach of fame,
 And ever-ringing avenues of song.

VI

Who is he that cometh, like an honour'd guest,
 With banner and with music, with soldier and with
 priest,
 With a nation weeping, and breaking on my rest?
 Mighty seaman, this is he
 Was great by land as thou by sea. 30
 Thine island loves thee well, thou famous man,
 The greatest sailor since our world began.
 Now, to the roll of muffled drums,
 To thee the greatest soldier comes;
 For this is he
 Was great by land as thou by sea;
 His foes were thine; he kept us free;
 O give him welcome, this is he,

*Apotrophe to
Nelson, in
heaven?*

Worthy of our gorgeous rites,
 And worthy to be laid by thee;
 For this is England's greatest son,
 He that gain'd a hundred fights,
 Nor even lost an English gun;
 This is he that far away
 Against the myriads of Assaye
 Clash'd with his fiery few and won;
 And underneath another sun,
 Warring on a later day,
 Round affrighted Lisbon drew
 The treble works, the vast designs
 Of his labour'd rampart-lines,
 Where he greatly stood at bay,
 Whence he issued forth anew,
 And ever great and greater grew,
 Beating from the wasted vines
 Back to France her banded swarms,
 Back to France with countless blows,
 Till o'er the hills her eagles flew
 Past the Pyrenean pines,
 Follow'd up in valley and glen
 With blare of bugle, clamour of men,
 Roli of cannon and clash of arms,
 And England pouring on her foes,
 Such a war had such a close.
 Again their ravening eagle rose
 In anger, wheel'd on Europe-shadowing wings,
 And barking for the thrones of kings;
 Till one that sought but Duty's iron crown
 On that loud sabbath shook the spoiler down;
 A day of onsets of despair!
 Dash'd on every rocky square
 Their surging charges foam'd themselves away;
 Last, the Prussian trumpet blew;
 Through the long-tormented air
 Heaven flash'd a sudden jubilant ray,
 And down we swept and charged and overthrew.
 So great a soldier taught us there,
 What long-enduring hearts could do
 In that world's-earthquake, Waterloo!
 Mighty seaman, tender and true,

10

20

30

40

*eagle
barking*

And pure as he from taint of craven guile,
 O saviour of the silver-coasted isle,
 O shaker of the Baltic and the Nile,
 If aught of things that here befall
 Touch a spirit among things divine,
 If love of country move thee there at all,
 Be glad, because his bones are laid by thine!
 And through the centuries let a people's voice
 In full acclaim,
 A people's voice,
 The proof and echo of all human fame,
 A people's voice, when they rejoice
 At civic revel and pomp and game,
 Attest their great commander's claim
 With honour, honour, honour, honour to him,
 Eternal honour to his name.

10

VII

A people's voice! we are a people yet.
 Though all men else their nobler dreams forget,
 Confused by brainless mobs and lawless Powers;
 Thank Him who isled us here, and roughly set
 His Saxon in blown seas and storming showers,
 We have a voice, with which to pay the debt
 Of boundless love and reverence and regret
 To those great men who fought, and kept it ours.
 And keep it ours, O God, from brute control;
 O Statesmen, guard us, guard the eye, the soul
 Of Europe, keep our noble England whole,
 And save the one true seed of freedom sown
 Betwixt a people and their ancient throne,
 That sober freedom out of which there springs
 Our loyal passion for our temperate kings;
 For, saving that, ye help to save mankind
 Till public wrong be crumbled into dust,
 And drill the raw world for the march of mind,
 Till crowds at length be sane and crowns be just.
 But wink no more in slothful overtrust.
 Remember him who led your hosts;
 He bade you guard the sacred coasts.
 Your cannons moulder on the seaward wall;

20

30

His voice is silent in your council-hall
 For ever; and whatever tempests lour
 For ever silent; even if they broke
 In thunder, silent; yet remember all
 He spoke among you, and the Man who spoke;
 Who never sold the truth to serve the hour,
 Nor palter'd with Eternal God for power;
 Who let the turbid streams of rumour flow
 Through either babbling world of high and low;
 Whose life was work, whose language rife
 With rugged maxims hewn from life;
 Who never spoke against a foe;
 Whose eighty winters freeze with one rebuke
 All great self-seekers trampling on the right:
 Truth-teller was our England's Alfred named;
 Truth-lover was our English Duke;
 Whatever record leap to light
 He never shall be shamed.

10

VIII

Lo, the leader in these glorious wars
 Now to glorious burial slowly borne,
 Follow'd by the brave of other lands,
 He, on whom from both her open hands
 Lavish Honour shower'd all her stars,
 And affluent Fortune emptied all her horn.
 Yea, let all good things await
 Him who cares not to be great,
 But as he saves or serves the state.
 Not once or twice in our rough island-story,
 The path of duty was the way to glory:
 He that walks it, only thirsting
 For the right, and learns to deaden
 Love of self, before his journey closes,
 He shall find the stubborn thistle bursting
 Into glossy purples, which outredde
 All voluptuous garden-roses.
 Not once or twice in our fair island-story,
 The path of duty was the way to glory:
 He, that ever following her commands,
 On with toil of heart and knees and hands,

20

30

Through the long gorge to the far light has won
 His path upward, and prevail'd,
 Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled
 Are close upon the shining table-lands
 To which our God Himself is moon and sun.
 Such was he: his work is done.
 But while the races of mankind endure,
 Let his great example stand
 Colossal, seen of every land,
 And keep the soldier firm, the statesman pure; 10
 Till in all lands and through all human story
 The path of duty be the way to glory:
 And let the land whose hearths he saved from shame
 For many and many an age proclaim
 At civic revel and pomp and game,
 And when the long-illumined cities flame,
 Their ever-loyal iron leader's fame,
 With honour, honour, honour, honour to him,
 Eternal honour to his name.

IX

Peace, his triumph will be sung 20
 By some yet unmoulded tongue
 Far on in summers that we shall not see:
 Peace, it is a day of pain
 For one about whose patriarchal knee
 Late the little children clung:
 O peace, it is a day of pain
 For one, upon whose hand and heart and brain
 Once the weight and fate of Europe hung.
 Ours the pain, be his the gain!
 More than is of man's degree 30
 Must be with us, watching here
 At this, our great solemnity.
 Whom we see not we revere.
 We revere, and we refrain
 From talk of battles loud and vain,
 And brawling memories all too free
 For such a wise humility
 As befits a solemn fane:
 We revere, and while we hear

The tides of Music's golden sea
 Setting toward eternity,
 Uplifted high in heart and hope are we,
 Until we doubt not that for one so true
 There must be other nobler work to do
 Than when he fought at Waterloo,
 And Victor he must ever be.
 For though the Giant Ages heave the hill
 And break the shore, and evermore
 Make and break, and work their will;
 Though world on world in myriad myriads roll
 Round us, each with different powers,
 And other forms of life than ours,
 What know we greater than the soul?
 On God and godlike men we build our trust.
 Hush, the Dead March wails in the people's ears:
 The dark crowd moves, and there are sobs and tears:
 The black earth yawns: the mortal disappears;
 Ashes to ashes, dust to dust;
 He is gone who seem'd so great.—
 Gone; but nothing can bereave him
 Of the force he made his own
 Being here, and we believe him
 Something far advanced in State,
 And that he wears a truer crown
 Than any wreath that man can weave him.
 But speak no more of his renown,
 Lay your earthly fancies down,
 And in the vast cathedral leave him,
 God accept him, Christ receive him.

10

20

30

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

I

Half a league, half a league,
 Half a league onward,
 All in the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred.
 "Forward, the Light Brigade!
 Charge for the guns!" he said:

Wallace

CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE 253

Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

II

"Forward, the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismay'd?
Not though the soldier knew
Some one had blunder'd:
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

10

III

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of Hell
Rode the six hundred.

20

IV

Flash'd all their sabres bare,
Flash'd as they turn'd in air,
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wonder'd:
Plung'd in the battery-smoke,
Right through the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reel'd from the sabre-stroke
Shatter'd and sunder'd.
Then they rode back—but not,
Not the six hundred.

30

V

Cannon to right of them,
 Cannon to left of them,
 Cannon behind them
 Volley'd and thunder'd;
 Storm'd at with shot and shell,
 While horse and hero fell,
 They that had fought so well
 Came through the jaws of Death,
 Back from the mouth of Hell,
 All that was left of them,
 Left of six hundred.

10

VI

When can their glory fade?
 Oh the wild charge they made!
 All the world wonder'd.
 Honour the charge they made!
 Honour the Light Brigade,
 Noble six hundred!

THE DAISY

WRITTEN AT EDINBURGH

O love, what hours were thine and mine,
 In lands of palm and southern pine;
 In lands of palm, of orange-blossom,
 Of olive, aloe, and maize and vine.

20

What Roman strength Turbia show'd
 In ruin, by the mountain road;
 How like a gem, beneath, the city
 Of little Monaco, basking, glow'd.

How richly down the rocky dell
 The torrent vineyard streaming fell
 To meet the sun and sunny waters,
 That only heaved with a summer swell.

What slender campanili grew
By bays, the peacock's neck in hue;
Where, here and there, on sandy beaches
A milky-bell'd amaryllis blew.

How young Columbus seem'd to rove,
Yet present in his natal grove,
Now watching high on mountain cornice,
And steering, now, from a purple cove,

Now pacing mute by ocean's rim;
Till, in a narrow street and dim, 10
I stay'd the wheels at Cogoletto,
And drank, and loyally drank to him.

Nor knew we well what pleased us most,
Not the clipt palm of which they boast;
But distant colour, happy hamlet,
A moulder'd citadel on the coast,

Or tower, or high hill-convent, seen
A light amid its olives green;
Or olive-hoary cape in ocean;
Or rosy blossom in hot ravine, 20

Where oleanders flush'd the bed
Of silent torrents, gravel-spread;
And, crossing, oft we saw the glisten
Of ice, far up on a mountain head.

We loved that hall, though white and cold,
Those niched shapes of noble mould,
A princely people's awful princes,
The grave, severe Genovese of old.

At Florence too what golden hours,
In those long galleries, were ours; 30
What drives about the fresh Cascinè,
Or walks in Boboli's ducal bowers.

In bright vignettes, and each complete,
Of tower or duomo, sunny-sweet,

Or palace, how the city glitter'd,
Through cypress avenues, at our feet.

But when we cross'd the Lombard plain
Remember what a plague of rain;

Of rain at Reggio, rain at Parma;
At Lodi, rain, Piacenza, rain.

And stern and sad (so rare the smiles
Of sunlight) look'd the Lombard piles;

Porch-pillars on the lion resting,
And sombre, old, colonnaded aisles.

10

O Milan, O the chanting quires,
The giant windows' blazon'd fires,

The height, the space, the gloom, the glory!
A mount of marble, a hundred spires!

I climb'd the roofs at break of day;
Sun-smitten Alps before me lay.

I stood among the silent statues,
And statued pinnacles, mute as they.

How faintly-flush'd, how phantom-fair,
Was Monte Rosa hanging there

20

A thousand shadowy-pencill'd valleys
And snowy dells in a golden air.

Remember how we came at last
To Como; shower and storm and blast
Had blown the lake beyond his limit,
And all was flooded; and how we pass'd

From Como, when the light was gray,
And in my head, for half the day,

The rich Virgilian rustic measure
Of Lari Maxume, all the way,

30

Like ballad-burthen music, kept,
As on The Lariano crept

To that fair port below the castle
Of Queen Theodolind, where we slept;

Or hardly slept, but watch'd awake
 A cypress in the moonlight shake,
 The moonlight touching o'er a terrace
 One tall agavè above the lake.

What more? we took our last adieu,
 And up the snowy Splügen drew,
 But ere we reach'd the highest summit
 I pluck'd a daisy, I gave it you.

It told of England then to me,
 And now it tells of Italy.

10

O love, we two shall go no longer
 To lands of summer across the sea;

So dear a life your arms enfold
 Whose crying is a cry for gold:
 Yet here to-night in this dark city,
 When ill and weary, alone and cold,

I found, though crush'd to hard and dry,
 This nursling of another sky
 Still in the little book you lent me,
 And where you tenderly laid it by:

20

And I forgot the clouded Forth,
 The gloom that saddens heaven and earth,
 The bitter East, the misty summer
 And gray metropolis of the North.

Perchance, to lull the throbs of pain,
 Perchance, to charm a vacant brain,
 Perchance, to dream you still beside me,
 My fancy fled to the South again.

THE BROOK

AN IDYL

"Here, by this brook, we parted; I to the East
 And he for Italy—too late—too late:
 One whom the strong sons of the world despise;

*One of the few
 examples of
 humor in
 Tennyson
 See par 2
 for 26
 2.4*

For lucky rhymes to him were scrip and share,
 And mellow metres more than cent for cent;
 Nor could he understand how money breeds,
 Thought it a dead thing; yet himself could make
 The thing that is not as the thing that is.
 Oh had he lived! In our schoolbooks we say,
 Of those that held their heads above the crowd,
 They flourish'd then or then; but life in him
 Could scarce be said to flourish, only touch'd
 On such a time as goes before the leaf, 10
 When all the wood stands in a mist of green,
 And nothing perfect: yet the brook he loved,
 For which, in branding summers of Bengal,
 Or ev'n the sweet half-English Neilgherry air,
 I panted, seems, as I re-listen to it,
 Prattling the primrose fancies of the boy,
 To me that loved him; for 'O brook,' he says,
 'O babbling brook,' says Edmund in his rhyme,
 'Whence come you?' and the brook, why not? replies.

I come from haunts of coot and hern, 20
 I make a sudden sally,
 And sparkle out among the fern,
 To bicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,
 Or slip between the ridges,
 By twenty thorps, a little town,
 And half a hundred bridges.

Till last by Philip's farm I flow
 To join the brimming river:
 For men may come and men may go, 30
 But I go on for ever.

"Poor lad, he died at Florence, quite worn out,
 Travelling to Naples. There is Darnley bridge,
 It has more ivy; there the river; and there
 Stands Philip's farm where brook and river meet.

I chatter over stony ways,
 In little sharps and trebles,
 I bubble into eddying bays,
 I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my banks I fret 40
 By many a field and fallow,

And many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed and mallow.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river:
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

“But Philip chatter’d more than brook or bird;
Old Philip; all about the fields you caught
His weary daylong chirping, like the dry
High-elbow’d grigs that leap in summer grass.

10

I wind about, and in and out,
With here a blossom sailing,
And here and there a lusty trout,
And here and there a grayling,

And here and there a foamy flake
Upon me, as I travel
With many a silvery waterbreak
Above the golden gravel,

And draw them all along, and flow
To join the brimming river:
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

20

“O darling Katie Willows, his one child!
A maiden of our century, yet most meek;
A daughter of our meadows, yet not coarse;
Straight, but as lissome as a hazel wand;
Her eyes a bashful azure, and her hair
In gloss and hue the chestnut, when the shell
Divides threefold to show the fruit within.

“Sweet Katie, once I did her a good turn,
Her and her far-off cousin and betrothed,
James Willows, of one name and heart with her.
For here I came, twenty years back—the week
Before I parted with poor Edmund; cross’d
By that old bridge which, half in ruins then,
Still makes a hoary eyebrow for the gleam
Beyond it, where the waters marry—cross’d,
Whistling a random bar of Bonnie Doon,
And push’d at Philip’s garden-gate. The gate,
Half-parted from a weak and scolding hinge,

30

Stuck; and he clamour'd from a casement, 'Run,'
To Katie somewhere in the walks below—
'Run, Katie!' Katie never ran: she moved
To meet me, winding under woodbine bowers,
A little flutter'd, with her eyelids down,
Fresh apple-blossom, blushing for a boon.

"What was it? less of sentiment than sense
Had Katie; not illiterate; neither one
Who dabbling in the fount of fictive tears,
And nursed by mealy-mouth'd philanthropies,
Divorce the Feeling from her mate the Deed. 10

"She told me. She and James had quarrell'd.
Why?

What cause of quarrel? None, she said, no cause;
James had no cause: but when I press'd the cause,
I learnt that James had flickering jealousies
Which anger'd her. Who anger'd James? I said.

But Katie snatch'd her eyes at once from mine,
And sketching with her slender pointed foot
Some figure like a wizard's pentagram
On garden gravel, let my query pass 20

Unclaim'd, in flushing silence, till I ask'd
If James were coming. 'Coming every day,'
She answer'd, 'ever longing to explain,
But evermore her father came across
With some long-winded tale, and broke him short;
And James departed vex'd with him and her.'

How could I help her? 'Would I—was it wrong?'
(Clasp'd hands and that petitionary grace
Of sweet seventeen subdued me ere she spoke)

'O would I take her father for one hour,
For one half-hour, and let him talk to me!' 30
And even while she spoke, I saw where James
Made toward us, like a wader in the surf,
Beyond the brook, waist-deep in meadow-sweet.

"O Katie, what I suffer'd for your sake!
For in I went, and call'd old Philip out
To show the farm: full willingly he rose:
He led me through the short sweet-smelling lanes

Of his wheat-suburb, babbling as he went.
He praised his land, his horses, his machines;
He praised his ploughs, his cows, his hogs, his dogs:
He praised his hens, his geese, his guinea-hens;
His pigeons, who in session on their roofs
Approved him, bowing at their own deserts:
Then from the plaintive mother's teat he took
Her blind and shuddering puppies, naming each,
And naming those, his friends, for whom they were:
Then cross'd the common into Darnley chase 10
To show Sir Arthur's deer. In copse and fern
Twinkled the innumerable ear and tail.
Then, seated on a serpent-rooted beech,
He pointed out a pasturing colt, and said,
'That was the four-year-old I sold the Squire.'
And there he told a long long-winded tale
Of how the Squire had seen the colt at grass,
And how it was the thing his daughter wish'd,
And how he sent the bailiff to the farm
To learn the price, and what the price he ask'd, 20
And how the bailiff swore that he was mad,
But he stood firm; and so the matter hung;
He gave them line: and five days after that
He met the bailiff at the Golden Fleece,
Who then and there had offer'd something more,
But he stood firm; and so the matter hung;
He knew the man; the colt would fetch its price;
He gave them line: and how by chance at last
(It might be May or April, he forgot,
The last of April or the first of May) 30
He found the bailiff riding by the farm,
And, talking from the point, he drew him in,
And there he mellow'd all his heart with ale,
Until they closed a bargain, hand in hand.

"Then, while I breathed in sight of haven, he—
Poor fellow, could he help it?—recommenced,
And ran through all the coltish chronicle,
Wild Will, Black Bess, Tantivy, Tallyho,
Reform, White Rose, Bellerophon, the Jilt,
Arbaces, and Phenomenon, and the rest,
Till, not to die a listener, I arose,

And with me Philip, talking still; and so
 We turn'd our foreheads from the falling sun,
 And following our own shadows thrice as long
 As when they follow'd us from Philip's door,
 Arrived, and found the sun of sweet content
 Re-risen in Katie's eyes, and all things well.

I steal by lawns and grassy plots,
 I slide by hazel covers;
 I move the sweet forget-me-nots
 That grow for happy lovers.

10

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
 Among my skimming swallows;
 I make the netted sunbeam dance
 Against my sandy shallows.

I murmur under moon and stars
 In brambly wildernesses;
 I linger by my shingly bars;
 I loiter round my cresses;

And out again I curve and flow
 To join the brimming river:
 For men may come and men may go,
 But I go on for ever.

20

Yes, men may come and go; and these are gone,
 All gone. My dearest brother, Edmund, sleeps,
 Not by the well-known stream and rustic spire,
 But unfamiliar Arno, and the dome
 Of Brunelleschi; sleeps in peace: and he,
 Poor Philip, of all his lavish waste of words
 Remains the lean P. W. on his tomb:
 I scraped the lichen from it: Katie walks
 By the long wash of Australasian seas
 Far off, and holds her head to other stars,
 And breathes in converse seasons. All are gone."

30

So Lawrence Aylmer, seated on a stile
 In the long hedge, and rolling in his mind
 Old waifs of rhyme, and bowing o'er the brook
 A tonsured head in middle age forlorn,
 Mused, and was mute. On a sudden a low breath
 Of tender air made tremble in the hedge
 The fragile bindweed-bells and briony rings;

40

And he look'd up. There stood a maiden near,
 Waiting to pass. In much amaze he stared
 On eyes a bashful azure, and on hair
 In gloss and hue the chestnut, when the shell
 Divides threefold to show the fruit within:
 Then, wondering, ask'd her, "Are you from the
 farm?"

"Yes," answer'd she. "Pray stay a little: par-
 don me;

What do they call you?" "Katie." "That were
 strange.

What surname?" "Willows." "No!" "That is my
 name."

"Indeed!" and here he look'd so self-perplex'd, 10
 That Katie laugh'd, and laughing blush'd, till he
 Laugh'd also, but as one before he wakes,
 Who feels a glimmering strangeness in his dream.
 Then looking at her; "Too happy, fresh and fair,
 Too fresh and fair in our sad world's best bloom,
 To be the ghost of one who bore your name
 About these meadows, twenty years ago."

"Have you not heard?" said Katie, "we came back.
 We bought the farm we tenanted before.

Am I so like her? so they said on board. 20

Sir, if you knew her in her English days,
 My mother, as it seems you did, the days
 That most she loves to talk of, come with me.
 My brother James is in the harvest-field:
 But she—you will be welcome—O, come in!"

MAUD

I

I

I hate the dreadful hollow behind the little wood,
 Its lips in the field above are dabbled with blood-red
 heath,
 The red-ribb'd ledges drip with a silent horror of
 blood,

And Echo there, whatever is ask'd her, answers
"Death."

II

For there in the ghastly pit long since a body was
found,
His who had given me life—O father! O God! was
it well?—
Mangled, and flatten'd, and crush'd, and dented into
the ground:
There yet lies the rock that fell with him when he
fell.

III

Did he fling himself down? who knows? for a vast
speculation had fail'd,
And ever he mutter'd and madden'd, and ever
wann'd with despair,
And out he walk'd when the wind like a broken
worldling wail'd,
And the flying gold of the ruin'd woodlands drove
through the air.

IV

I remember the time, for the roots of my hair were 10
stirr'd
By a shuffled step, by a dead weight trail'd, by a
whisper'd fright,
And my pulses closed their gates with a shock on my
heart as I heard
The shrill-edged shriek of a mother divide the shud-
dering night.

V

Villainy somewhere! whose? One says, we are vil-
lains all.
Not he: his honest fame should at least by me be
maintain'd:

But that old man, now lord of the broad estate and
the Hall,
Dropt off gorg'd from a scheme that had left us flaccid
and drain'd.

VI

Why do they prate of the blessings of Peace? we
have made them a curse,
Pickpockets, each hand lusting for all that is not its
own;
And lust of gain, in the spirit of Cain, is it better
or worse
Than the heart of the citizen hissing in war on his
own hearthstone?

VII

But these are the days of advance, the works of the
men of mind,
When who but a fool would have faith in a trades-
man's ware or his word?
Is it peace or war? Civil war, as I think, and that of
a kind
The viler, as underhand, not openly bearing the ¹⁰
sword.

VIII

Sooner or later I too may passively take the print
Of the golden age—why not? I have neither hope
nor trust;
May make my heart as a millstone, set my face as
a flint,
Cheat and be cheated, and die: who knows? we are
ashes and dust.

IX

Peace sitting under her olive, and slurring the days
gone by,

When the poor are hovell'd and hustl'd together,
each sex, like swine,
When only the ledger lives, and when only not all
men lie;
Peace in her vineyard—yes!—but a company forges
the wine.

X

And the vitriol madness flushes up in the ruffian's
head,
Till the filthy by-lane rings to the yell of the tram-
pled wife,
While chalk and alum and plaster are sold to the
poor for bread,
And the spirit of murder works in the very means
of life.

XI

And Sleep must lie down arm'd, for the villainous
centre-bits
Grind on the wakeful ear in the hush of the moonless
nights,
While another is cheating the sick of a few last ¹⁰
gasps, as he sits
To pestle a poison'd poison behind his crimson lights.

XII

When a Mammonite mother kills her babe for a
burial fee,
And Timour-Mammon grins on a pile of children's
bones,
Is it peace or war? better, war! loud war by land
and by sea—
War with a thousand battles, and shaking a hundred
thrones.

XIII

For I trust if an enemy's fleet came yonder round
by the hill,
And the rushing battle-bolt sang from the three-
decker out of the foam,

That the smooth-faced snub-nosed rogue would leap
 from his counter and till,
 And strike, if he could, were it but with his cheating
 yard-wand, home.

XIV

What! am I raging alone as my father raged in his
 mood?
 Must *I* too creep to the hollow and dash myself down
 and die
 Rather than hold by the law that I made, nevermore
 to brood
 On a horror of shatter'd limbs and a wretched
 swindler's lie?

XV

Would there be sorrow for *me*? there was *love* in
 the passionate shriek,
 Love for the silent thing that had made false haste
 to the grave—
 Wrapt in a cloak, as I saw him, and thought he
 would rise and speak
 And rave at the lie and the liar, ah God, as he used 10
 to rave.

XVI

I am sick of the Hall and the hill, I am sick of the
 moor and the main.
 Why should I stay? can a sweeter chance ever come
 to me here?
 Oh, having the nerves of motion as well as the
 nerves of pain,
 Were it not wise if I fled from the place and the
 pit and the fear?

XVII

There are workmen up at the Hall! they are coming
 back from abroad;

The dark old place will be gilt by the touch of a
millionaire:

I have heard, I know not whence, of the singular
beauty of Maud;

I play'd with the girl when a child; she promised
then to be fair.

XVIII

Maud with her venturous climbings and tumbles and
childish escapes,

Maud the delight of the village, the ringing joy of
the Hall,

Maud with her sweet purse-mouth when my father
dangled the grapes,

Maud the beloved of my mother, the moon-faced
darling of all,—

XIX

What is she now? My dreams are bad. She may
bring me a curse.

No, there is fatter game on the moor; she will let
me alone.

Thanks, for the fiend best knows whether woman 10
or man be the worse.

I will bury myself in my books, and the Devil may
pipe to his own.

II

Long have I sigh'd for a calm: God grant I may
find it at last!

It will never be broken by Maud, she has neither
savour nor salt,

But a cold and clear-cut face, as I found when her
carriage pass'd,

Perfectly beautiful: let it be granted her, where is
the fault?

All that I saw (for her eyes were downcast, not
to be seen)

Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null,

Dead perfection, no more; nothing more, if it had
not been
For a chance of travel, a paleness, an hour's defect
of the rose,
Or an underlip, you may call it a little too ripe,
too full,
Or the least little delicate aquiline curve in a sensitive
nose,
From which I escaped heart-free, with the least little
touch of spleen.

III

Cold and clear-cut face, why come you so cruelly
meek,
Breaking a slumber in which all spleenful folly was
drown'd,
Pale with the golden beam of an eyelash dead on
the cheek,
Passionless, pale, cold face, star-sweet on a gloom
profound;
Womanlike, taking revenge too deep for a transient ¹⁰
wrong
Done but in thought to your beauty, and ever as
pale as before
Growing and fading and growing upon me without
a sound,
Luminous, gemlike, ghostlike, deathlike, half the
night long
Growing and fading and growing, till I could bear
it no more,
But arose, and all by myself in my own dark garden
ground,
Listening now to the tide in its broad-flung ship-
wrecking roar,
Now to the scream of a madden'd beach dragged
down by the wave,
Walk'd in a wintry wind by a ghastly glimmer, and
found
The shining daffodil dead, and Orion low in his
grave.

IV

I

A million emeralds break from the ruby-budded lime
In the little grove where I sit—ah, wherefore cannot
 I be
Like things of the season gay, like the bountiful
 season bland,
When the far-off sail is blown by the breeze of a
 softer clime,
Half-lost in the liquid azure bloom of a crescent
 of sea,
The silent sapphire-spangled marriage ring of the
 land?

II

Below me, there, is the village, and looks how quiet
 and small!
And yet bubbles o'er like a city, with gossip, scandal,
 and spite;
And Jack on his ale-house bench has as many lies
 as a Czar;
And here on the landward side, by a red rock, 10
 glimmers the Hall;
And up in the high Hall-garden I see her pass like
 a light;
But sorrow seize me if ever that light be my leading
 star!

III

When have I bow'd to her father, the wrinkled head
 of the race?
I met her to-day with her brother, but not to her
 brother I bow'd;
I bow'd to his lady-sister as she rode by on the
 moor;
But the fire of a foolish pride flash'd over her
 beautiful face.

O child, you wrong your beauty, believe it, in being
so proud;
Your father has wealth well-gotten, and I am name-
less and poor.

IV

I keep but a man and a maid, ever ready to slander
and steal;
I know it, and smile a hard-set smile, like a stoic,
or like
A wiser epicurean, and let the world have its way:
For nature is one with rapine, a harm no preacher
can heal;
The Mayfly is torn by the swallow, the sparrow
spear'd by the shrike,
And the whole little wood where I sit is a world of
plunder and prey.

V

We are puppets, Man in his pride, and Beauty fair
in her flower;
Do we move ourselves, or are moved by an unseen 10
hand at a game
That pushes us off from the board, and others ever
succeed?
Ah yet, we cannot be kind to each other here for
an hour;
We whisper, and hint, and chuckle, and grin at a
brother's shame;
However we brave it out, we men are a little breed.

VI

A monstrous eft was of old the Lord and Master of
Earth,
For him did his high sun flame, and his river bil-
lowing ran,
And he felt himself in his force to be Nature's
crowning race.

As nine months go to the shaping an infant ripe
for his birth,
So many a million of ages have gone to the making
of man:
He now is first, but is he the last? is he not too
base?

VII

The man of science himself is fonder of glory, and
vain,
An eye well-practised in nature, a spirit bounded and
poor;
The passionate heart of the poet is whirl'd into folly
and vice.
I would not marvel at either, but keep a temperate
brain;
For not to desire or admire, if a man could learn
it, were more
Than to walk all day like the sultan of old in a
garden of spice.

VIII

For the drift of the Maker is dark, an Isis hid by 10
the veil.
Who knows the ways of the world, how God will
bring them about?
Our planet is one, the suns are many, the world is
wide.
Shall I weep if a Poland fall? shall I shriek if a
Hungary fail?
Or an infant civilization be ruled with rod or with
knout?
I have not made the world, and He that made it will
guide.

IX

Be mine a philosopher's life in the quiet woodland
ways,
Where if I cannot be gay let a passionless peace
be my lot,

Far-off from the clamour of liars belied in the
 hubbub of lies;
 From the long-neck'd geese of the world that are
 ever hissing dispraise
 Because their natures are little, and, whether he
 heed it or not,
 Where each man walks with his head in a cloud of
 poisonous flies.

X

And most of all would I flee from the cruel mad-
 ness of love,
 The honey of poison-flowers and all the measureless
 ill.
 Ah, Maud, you milkwhite fawn, you are all unmeet
 for a wife.
 Your mother is mute in her grave as her image in
 marble above;
 Your father is ever in London, you wander about
 at your will;
 You have but fed on the roses, and lain in the lilies 10
 of life.

V

I

A voice by the cedar tree,
 In the meadow under the Hall!
 She is singing an air that is known to me,
 A passionate ballad gallant and gay,
 A martial song like a trumpet's call!
 Singing alone in the morning of life,
 In the happy morning of life and of May,
 Singing of men that in battle array,
 Ready in heart and ready in hand,
 March with banner and bugle and fife
 To the death, for their native land.

II

Maud with her exquisite face,
And wild voice pealing up to the sunny sky,
And feet like sunny gems on an English green,
Maud in the light of her youth and her grace,
Singing of Death, and of Honour that cannot die,
Till I well could weep for a time so sordid and mean,
And myself so languid and base.

III

Silence, beautiful voice!
Be still, for you only trouble the mind
With a joy in which I cannot rejoice, 10
A glory I shall not find.
Still! I will hear you no more,
For your sweetness hardly leaves me a choice
But to move to the meadow and fall before
Her feet on the meadow grass, and adore,
Not her, who is neither courtly nor kind,
Not her, not her, but a voice.

VI

I

Morning arises stormy and pale,
No sun, but a wannish glare
In fold upon fold of hueless cloud, 20
And the budded peaks of the wood are bow'd
Caught and cuff'd by the gale:
I had fancied it would be fair.

II

Whom but Maud should I meet
Last night, when the sunset burn'd
On the blossom'd gable-ends
At the head of the village street—
Whom but Maud should I meet?

And she touch'd my hand with a smile so sweet
She made me divine amends
For a courtesy not return'd.

III

And thus a delicate spark
Of glowing and growing light
Through the livelong hours of the dark
Kept itself warm in the heart of my dreams,
Ready to burst in a colour'd flame;
Till at last when the morning came
In a cloud, it faded, and seems
But an ashen-gray delight. 10

IV

What if with her sunny hair,
And smile as sunny as cold,
She meant to weave me a snare
Of some coquettish deceit,
Cleopatra-like as of old
To entangle me when we met,
To have her lion roll in a silken net
And fawn at a victor's feet.

V

Ah, what shall I be at fifty 20
Should Nature keep me alive,
If I find the world so bitter
When I am but twenty-five?
Yet if she were not a cheat,
If Maud were all that she seem'd,
And her smile were all that I dream'd,
Then the world were not so bitter
But a smile could make it sweet.

VI

What if though her eye seem'd full
Of a kind intent to me, 30

What if that dandy-despot, he,
 That jewell'd mass of millinery,
 That oil'd and curl'd Assyrian Bull
 Smelling of musk and of insolence,
 Her brother, from whom I keep aloof,
 Who wants the finer politic sense
 To mask, though but in his own behoof,
 With a glassy smile his brutal scorn—
 What if he had told her yestermorn
 How prettily for his own sweet sake
 A face of tenderness might be feign'd,
 And a moist mirage in desert eyes,
 That so, when the rotten hustings shake
 In another month to his brazen lies,
 A wretched vote may be gain'd.

10

VII

For a raven ever croaks at my side,
 Keep watch and ward, keep watch and ward,
 Or thou wilt prove their tool.
 Yea, too, myself from myself I guard,
 For often a man's own angry pride
 Is cap and bells for a fool.

20

VIII

Perhaps the smile and tender tone
 Came out of her pitying womanhood,
 For am I not, am I not, here alone
 So many a summer since she died,
 My mother, who was so gentle and good?
 Living alone in an empty house,
 Here half hid in the gleaming wood,
 Where I hear the dead at midday moan,
 And the shrieking rush of the wainscot mouse,
 And my own sad name in corners cried,
 When the shiver of dancing leaves is thrown
 About its echoing chambers wide,
 Till a morbid hate and horror have grown
 Of a world in which I have hardly mix'd,

30

And a morbid eating lichen fix'd
On a heart half turn'd to stone.

IX

O heart of stone, are you flesh, and caught
By that you swore to withstand?
For what was it else within me wrought
But, I fear, the new strong wine of love,
That made my tongue so stammer and trip
When I saw the treasured splendour, her hand,
Come sliding out of her sacred glove,
And the sunlight broke from her lip? 10

X

I have play'd with her when a child;
She remembers it now we meet.
Ah well, well, well, I may be beguiled
By some coquettish deceit.
Yet if she were not a cheat,
If Maud were all that she seem'd,
And her smile had all that I dream'd,
Then the world were not so bitter
But a smile could make it sweet.

VII

I

Did I hear it half in a doze 20
Long since, I know not where?
Did I dream it an hour ago,
When asleep in this arm-chair?

II

Men were drinking together,
Drinking and talking of me;
"Well, if it prove a girl, the boy
Will have plenty: so let it be."

III

Is it an echo of something
 Read with a boy's delight,
 Viziers nodding together
 In some Arabian night?

IV

Strange that I hear two men,
 Somewhere, talking of me;
 "Well, if it prove a girl, my boy
 Will have plenty: so let it be."

VIII

She came to the village church,
 And sat by a pillar alone; 10
 An angel watching an urn
 Wept over her, carved in stone;
 And once, but once, she lifted her eyes,
 And suddenly, sweetly, strangely blush'd
 To find they were met by my own;
 And suddenly, sweetly, my heart beat stronger
 And thicker, until I heard no longer
 The snowy-banded, dilettante,
 Delicate-handed priest intone;
 And thought, is it pride, and mus'd and sigh'd, 20
 "No surely, now it cannot be pride."

IX

I was walking a mile,
 More than a mile from the shore,
 The sun look'd out with a smile
 Betwixt the cloud and the moor,
 And riding at set of day
 Over the dark moor land,
 Rapidly riding far away,
 She waved to me with her hand.
 There were two at her side,

Something flash'd in the sun,
Down by the hill I saw them ride,
In a moment they were gone:
Like a sudden spark
Struck vainly in the night,
And back returns the dark
With no more hope of light.

X

I

Sick, am I sick of a jealous dread?
Was not one of the two at her side
This new-made lord, whose splendour plucks 10
The slavish hat from the villager's head?
Whose old grandfather has lately died,
Gone to a blacker pit, for whom
Grimy nakedness dragging his trucks
And laying his trams in a poison'd gloom
Wrought, till he crept from a gutted mine
Master of half a servile shire,
And left his coal all turn'd into gold
To a grandson, first of his noble line, 20
Rich in the grace all women desire,
Strong in the power that all men adore,
And simper and set their voices lower,
And soften as if to a girl, and hold
Awe-stricken breaths at a work divine,
Seeing his gewgaw castle shine,
New as his title, built last year,
There amid perky larches and pine,
And over the sullen-purple moor
(Look at it) pricking a cockney ear.

II

What, has he found my jewel out? 30
For one of the two that rode at her side
Bound for the Hall, I was sure was he—
Bound for the Hall, and I think for a bride.

Blithe would her brother's acceptance be.
Maud could be gracious too, no doubt,
To a lord, a captain, a padded shape,
A bought commission, a waxen face,
A rabbit mouth that is ever agape—
Bought? what is it he cannot buy?
And therefore splenetic, personal, base,
A wounded thing with a rancorous cry,
At war with myself and a wretched race,
Sick, sick to the heart of life, am I.

10

III

Last week came one to the county town,
To preach our poor little army down,
And play the game of the despot kings,
Though the state has done it and thrice as well:
This broad-brimm'd hawker of holy things,
Whose ear is stuff'd with his cotton, and rings
Even in dreams to the chink of his pence—
This huckster put down war! can he tell
Whether war be a cause or a consequence?
Put down the passions that make earth Hell!
Down with ambition, avarice, pride,
Jealousy, down! cut off from the mind
The bitter springs of anger and fear;
Down too, down at your own fireside,
With the evil tongue and the evil ear,
For each is at war with mankind.

20

IV

I wish I could hear again
The chivalrous battle-song
That she warbled alone in her joy!
I might persuade myself then
She would not do herself this great wrong
To take a wanton dissolute boy
For a man and leader of men.

30

V

Ah, God, for a man with heart, head, hand,
Like some of the simple great ones gone
For ever and ever by,
One still strong man in a blatant land,
Whatever they call him, what care I,
Aristocrat, democrat, autocrat—one
Who can rule and dare not lie.

VI

And ah for a man to arise in me,
That the man I am may cease to be!

XI

I

Oh let the solid ground
Not fail beneath my feet
Before my life has found
What some have found so sweet;
Then let come what come may,
What matter if I go mad,
I shall have had my day.

II

Let the sweet heavens endure,
Not close and darken above me
Before I am quite, quite sure
That there is one to love me;
Then let come what come may
To a life that has been so sad,
I shall have had my day.

Contrast with
10
Hamlet's!
"Oh what
this two words
solid feel
would mean

XII

I

Birds in the high Hall-garden
When twilight was falling,
Maud, Maud, Maud, Maud,
They were crying and calling.

II

Where was Maud? in our wood;
And I, who else, was with her,
Gathering woodland lilies,
Myriads blow together.

III

Birds in our wood sang
Ringing through the valleys,
Maud is here, here, here,
In among the lilies.

10

IV

I kiss'd her slender hand,
She took the kiss sedately;
Maud is not seventeen,
But she is tall and stately.

V

I to cry out on pride
Who have won her favour!
Oh, Maud were sure of Heaven
If lowliness could save her.

20

VI

I know the way she went
Home with her maiden posy,

For her feet have touch'd the meadows,
And left the daisies rosy.

VII

Birds in the high Hall-garden
Were crying and calling to her
Where is Maud, Maud, Maud?
One is come to woo her.

VIII

Look, a horse at the door,
And little King Charles is snarling,
Go back, my lord, across the moor,
You are not her darling.

10

XIII

I

Scorn'd, to be scorn'd by one that I scorn,
Is that a matter to make me fret?
That a calamity hard to be borne?
Well, he may live to hate me yet.
Fool that I am to be vex'd with his pride!
I pass'd him, I was crossing his lands;
He stood on the path a little aside;
His face, as I grant, in spite of spite,
Has a broad-blown comeliness, red and white,
And six feet two, as I think, he stands;
But his essences turn'd the live air sick,
And barbarous opulence jewel-thick
Sunn'd itself on his breast and his hands.

20

II

Who shall call me ungentle, unfair,
I long'd so heartily then and there
To give him the grasp of fellowship;
But while I pass'd he was humming an air,
Stopt, and then with a riding-whip

Leisurely tapping a glossy boot,
 And curving a contumelious lip,
 Gorgonized me from head to foot
 With a stony British stare.

III

Why sits he here in his father's chair?
 That old man never comes to his place:
 Shall I believe him ashamed to be seen?
 For only once, in the village street,
 Last year, I caught a glimpse of his face,
 A gray old wolf and a lean. 10
 Scarcely, now, would I call him a cheat;
 For then, perhaps, as a child of deceit,
 She might by a true descent be untrue;
 And Maud is as true as Maud is sweet:
 Though I fancy her sweetness only due
 To the sweeter blood by the other side;
 Her mother has been a thing complete,
 However she came to be so allied.
 And fair without, faithful within,
 Maud to him is nothing akin: 20
 Some peculiar mystic grace
 Made her only the child of her mother,
 And heap'd the whole inherited sin
 On that huge scapegoat of the race,
 All, all upon the brother.

IV

Peace, angry spirit, and let him be!
 Has not his sister smiled on me?

XIV

I

Maud has a garden of roses
 And lilies fair on a lawn;
 There she walks in her state,
 And tends upon bed and bower: 30

And thither I climb'd at dawn,
And stood by her garden-gate;
A lion ramps at the top,
He is claspt by a passion-flower.

II

Maud's own little oak-room
(Which Maud, like a precious stone
Set in the heart of the carven gloom,
Lights with herself, when alone
She sits by her music and books,
And her brother lingers late
With a roystering company) looks
Upon Maud's own garden-gate;
And I thought as I stood, if a hand, as white
As ocean-foam in the moon, were laid
On the hasp of the window, and my Delight
Had a sudden desire, like a glorious ghost, to glide,
Like a beam of the seventh Heaven, down to my side,
There were but a step to be made.

III

The fancy flatter'd my mind,
And again seem'd overbold;
Now I thought that she car'd for me,
Now I thought she was kind
Only because she was cold.

IV

I heard no sound where I stood
But the rivulet on from the lawn
Running down to my own dark wood;
Or the voice of the long sea-wave as it swell'd
Now and then in the dim-gray dawn;
But I look'd, and round, all round the house I beheld
The death-white curtain drawn;
Felt a horror over me creep,
Prickle my skin and catch my breath,

Knew that the death-white curtain meant but sleep,
Yet I shudder'd and thought like a fool of the sleep
of death.

XV

So dark a mind within me dwells,
And I make myself such evil cheer,
That if I be dear to some one else,
Then some one else may have much to fear;
But if I be dear to some one else,
Then I should be to myself more dear.
Shall I not take care of all that I think,
Yea, ev'n of wretched meat and drink,
If I be dear,
If I be dear to some one else?

10

XVI

I

This slump of earth has left his estate
The lighter by the loss of his weight;
And so that he find what he went to seek,
And fulsome Pleasure clog him, and drown
His heart in the gross mud-honey of town,
He may stay for a year who has gone for a week:
But this is the day when I must speak,
And I see my Oread coming down,
O this is the day!
O beautiful creature, what am I
That I dare to look her way;
Think I may hold dominion sweet,
Lord of the pulse that is lord of her breast,
And dream of her beauty with tender dread,
From the delicate Arab arch of her feet
To the grace that, bright and light as the crest
Of a peacock, sits on her shining head,
And she knows it not: oh, if she knew it,
To know her beauty might half undo it.
I know it the one bright thing to save
My yet young life in the wilds of Time,

20

30

Perhaps from madness, perhaps from crime,
Perhaps from a selfish grave.

II

What, if she be fasten'd to this fool lord,
Dare I bid her abide by her word?
Should I love her so well if she
Had given her word to a thing so low?
Shall I love her as well if she
Can break her word were it even for me?
I trust that it is not so.

III

Catch not my breath, O clamorous heart,
Let not my tongue be a thrall to my eye,
For I must tell her before we part,
I must tell her, or die.

10

XVII

Go not, happy day,
From the shining fields,
Go not, happy day,
Till the maiden yields.
Rosy is the West,
Rosy is the South.
Roses are her cheeks,
And a rose her mouth
When the happy Yes
Falters from her lips,
Pass and blush the news
O'er the blowing ships;
Over blowing seas,
Over seas at rest,
Pass the happy news,
Blush it through the West;
Till the red man dance
By his red cedar tree,
And the red man's babe
Leap, beyond the sea.

20

30

Blush from West to East,
 Blush from East to West,
 Till the West is East,
 Blush it through the West.
 Rosy is the West,
 Rosy is the South,
 Roses are her cheeks,
 And a rose her mouth.

XVIII

I

I have led her home, my love, my only friend.
 There is none like her, none.
 And never yet so warmly ran my blood
 And sweetly, on and on
 Calming itself to the long-wish'd-for end,
 Full to the banks, close on the promised good.

10

II

None like her, none.
 Just now the dry-tongued laurels' pattering talk
 Seem'd her light foot along the garden walk.
 And shook my heart to think she comes once more;
 But even then I heard her close the door—
 The gates of Heaven are closed, and she is gone.

20

III

There is none like her, none—
 Nor will be when our summers have deceased.
 Oh, art thou sighing for Lebanon
 In the long breeze that streams to thy delicious East,
 Sighing for Lebanon,
 Dark cedar, though thy limbs have here increased,
 Upon a pastoral slope as fair,
 And looking to the South, and fed
 With honey'd rain and delicate air,

And haunted by the starry head
Of her whose gentle will has changed my fate,
And made my life a perfumed altar-flame;
And over whom thy darkness must have spread
With such delight as theirs of old, thy great
Forefathers of the thornless garden, there
Shadowing the snow-limb'd Eve from whom she
came?

IV

Here will I lie, while these long branches sway,
And you fair stars that crown a happy day
Go in and out as if at merry play, 10
Who am no more so all forlorn,
As when it seem'd far better to be born
To labour and the mattock-harden'd hand,
Than nurs'd at ease and brought to understand
A sad astrology, the boundless plan
That makes you tyrants in your iron skies,
Innumerable, pitiless, passionless eyes,
Cold fires, yet with power to burn and brand
His nothingness into man.

V

But now shine on, and what care I, 20
Who in this stormy gulf have found a pearl
The countercharm of space and hollow sky,
And do accept my madness, and would die
• To save from some slight shame one simple girl.

VI

Would die; for sullen-seeming Death may give
More life to Love than is or ever was
In our low world, where yet 'tis sweet to live.
Let no one ask me how it came to pass;
It seems that I am happy, that to me
A livelier emerald twinkles in the grass, 30
A purer sapphire melts into the sea.

VII

Not die; but live a life of truest breath,
 And teach true life to fight with mortal wrongs.
 Oh, why should Love, like men in drinking-songs,
 Spice his fair banquet with the dust of death?
 Make answer, Maud my bliss,
 Maud made my Maud by that long lover's kiss,
 Life of my life, wilt thou not answer this?
 "The dusky strand of Death, inwoven here
 With dear Love's tie, makes Love himself more
 dear."

VIII

Is that enchanted moan only the swell 10
 Of the long waves that roll in yonder bay?
 And hark the clock within, the silver knell
 Of twelve sweet hours that pass'd in bridal white,
 And died to live, long as my pulses play;
 But now by this my love has closed her sight
 And given false death her hand, and stol'n away
 To dreamful wastes where footless fancies dwell
 Among the fragments of the golden day.
 May nothing there her maiden grace affright!
 Dear heart, I feel with thee the drowsy spell. 20
 My bride to be, my evermore delight,
 My own heart's heart, and ownest own, farewell;
 It is but for a little space I go:
 And ye meanwhile far over moor and fell
 Beat to the noiseless music of the night!
 Has our whole earth gone nearer to the glow
 Of your soft splendours that you look so bright?
 I have climb'd nearer out of lonely Hell.
 Beat, happy stars, timing with things below,
 Beat with my heart more blest than heart can tell, 30
 Blest, but for some dark undercurrent woe
 That seems to draw—but it shall not be so:
 Let all be well, be well.

XIX

I

Her brother is coming back to-night,
Breaking up my dream of delight.

II

My dream? do I dream of bliss?
I have walk'd awake with Truth.
Oh, when did a morning shine
So rich in atonement as this
For my dark-dawning youth,
Darken'd watching a mother decline,
And that dead man at her heart and mine:
For who was left to watch her but I? 10
Yet so did I let my freshness die.

III

I trust that I did not talk
To gentle Maud in our walk
(For often in lonely wanderings
I have curs'd him even to lifeless things)
But I trust that I did not talk,
Not touch on her father's sin:
I am sure I did but speak
Of my mother's faded cheek 20
When it slowly grew so thin,
That I felt she was slowly dying,
Vex'd with lawyers and harass'd with debt:
For how often I caught her with eyes all wet,
Shaking her head at her son and sighing
A world of trouble within!

IV

And Maud too, Maud was moved
To speak of the mother she loved
As one scarce less forlorn,

Dying abroad and it seems apart
From him who had ceased to share her heart,
And ever mourning over the feud,
The household Fury sprinkled with blood
By which our houses are torn:
How strange was what she said,
When only Maud and the brother
Hung over her dying bed—
That Maud's dark father and mine
Had bound us one to the other,
Betroth'd us over their wine,
On the day when Maud was born;
Seal'd her mine from her first sweet breath.
Mine, mine by a right, from birth till death,
Mine, mine—our fathers have sworn.

10

V

But the true blood spilt had in it a heat
To dissolve the precious seal on a bond,
That, if left uncancell'd, had been so sweet:
And none of us thought of a something beyond,
A desire that awoke in the heart of the child,
As it were a duty done to the tomb,
To be friends for her sake, to be reconciled;
And I was cursing them and my doom,
And letting a dangerous thought run wild
While often abroad in the fragrant gloom
Of foreign churches—I see her there,
Bright English lily, breathing a prayer
To be friends, to be reconciled!

20

VI

But then what a flint is he!
Abroad, at Florence, at Rome,
I find whenever she touch'd on me
This brother had laugh'd her down,
And at last, when each came home,
He had darken'd into a frown,
Chid her, and forbid her to speak

30

To me, her friend of the years before;
And this was what had reddened her cheek
When I bow'd to her on the moor.

VII

Yet Maud, although not blind
To the faults of his heart and mind,
I see she cannot but love him,
And says he is rough but kind,
And wishes me to approve him,
And tells me, when she lay
Sick once, with a fear of worse,
That he left his wine and horses and play,
Sat with her, read to her, night and day,
And tended her like a nurse.

10

VIII

Kind? but the deathbed desire
Spurn'd by this heir of the liar—
Rough but kind? yet I know
He has plotted against me in this,
That he plots against me still.
Kind to Maud? that were not amiss.
Well, rough but kind; why, let it be so:
For shall not Maud have her will?

20

IX

For, Maud, so tender and true,
As long as my life endures
I feel I shall owe you a debt
That I never can hope to pay;
And if ever I should forget
That I owe this debt to you,
And for your sweet sake to yours,
O then, what then shall I say?—
If ever I *should* forget,

30

May God make me more wretched
Than ever I have been yet!

X

So now I have sworn to bury
All this dead body of hate,
I feel so free and so clear
By the loss of that dead weight,
That I should grow light-headed, I fear,
Fantastically merry;
But that her brother comes, like a blight
On my fresh hope, to the Hall to-night.

10

XX

I

Strange, that I felt so gay,
Strange, that I tried to-day
To beguile her melancholy;
The Sultan, as we name him—
She did not wish to blame him—
But he vex'd her and perplex'd her
With his worldly talk and folly:
Was it gentle to reprove her
For stealing out of view
From a little lazy lover
Who but claims her as his due?
Or for chilling his caresses
By the coldness of her manners,
Nay, the plainness of her dresses?
Now I know her but in two,
Nor can pronounce upon it
If one should ask me whether
The habit, hat, and feather,
Or the frock and gipsy bonnet
Be the neater and completer;
For nothing can be sweeter
Than maiden Maud in either.

20

30

II

But to-morrow, if we live,
Our ponderous squire will give
A grand political dinner
To half the squirrelings near;
And Maud will wear her jewels,
And the bird of prey will hover,
And the titmouse hope to win her
With his chirrup at her ear.

III

A grand political dinner
To the men of many acres,
A gathering of the Tory,
A dinner and then a dance
For the maids and marriage-makers,
And every eye but mine will glance
At Maud in all her glory.

10

IV

For I am not invited,
But, with the Sultan's pardon,
I am all as well delighted,
For I know her own rose-garden,
And mean to linger in it
Till the dancing will be over;
And then, oh then, come out to me
For a minute, but for a minute,
Come out to your own true lover,
That your true lover may see
Your glory also, and render
All homage to his own darling,
Queen Maud in all her splendour.

20

XXI

Rivulet crossing my ground,
And bringing me down from the Hall

30

This garden-rose that I found,
 Forgetful of Maud and me,
 And lost in trouble and moving round
 Here at the head of a tinkling fall,
 And trying to pass to the sea,—
 O Rivulet, born at the Hall,
 My Maud has sent it by thee
 (If I read her sweet will right)
 On a blushing mission to me,
 Saying in odour and colour, "Ah, be
 Among the roses to-night."

10

XXII

I

Come into the garden, Maud,
 For the black bat, night, has flown,
 Come into the garden, Maud,
 I am here at the gate alone;
 And the woodbine spices are wafted abroad,
 And the musk of the roses blown.

II

For a breeze of morning moves,
 And the planet of Love is on high,
 Beginning to faint in the light that she loves
 On a bed of daffodil sky,
 To faint in the light of the sun she loves,
 To faint in his light, and to die.

20

III

All night have the roses heard
 The flute, violin, bassoon;
 All night has the casement jessamine stirr'd
 To the dancers dancing in tune;
 Till a silence fell with the waking bird,
 And a hush with the setting moon.

IV

I said to the lily, "There is but one
With whom she has heart to be gay.
When will the dancers leave her alone?
She is weary of dance and play."
Now half to the setting moon are gone,
And half to the rising day;
Low on the sand and loud on the stone
The last wheel echoes away.

V

I said to the rose, "The brief night goes
In babble and revel and wine.
O young lord-lover, what sighs are those
For one that will never be thine?
But mine, but mine," so I sware to the rose,
"For ever and ever, mine."

10

VI

And the soul of the rose went into my blood,
As the music clash'd in the hall;
And long by the garden lake I stood,
For I heard your rivulet fall
From the lake to the meadow and on to the wood,
Our wood that is dearer than all;

20

VII

From the meadow your walks have left so sweet
That whenever a March wind sighs
He sets the jewel-print of your feet
In violets blue as your eyes,
To the woody hollows in which we meet
And the valleys of Paradise.

VIII

*298
Pierced close
Bathos*

The slender acacia would not shake
 One long milk-bloom on the tree;
 The white lake-blossom fell into the lake,
 As the pimpernel dozed on the lea;
 But the rose was awake all night for your sake,
 Knowing your promise to me;
 The lilies and roses were all awake,
 They sigh'd for the dawn and thee.

IX

Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls,
 Come hither, the dances are done,
 In gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls,
 Queen lily and rose in one;
 Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls,
 To the flowers, and be their sun.

10

X

*Bathos - 1. given
too far*

There has fallen a splendid tear
 From the passion-flower at the gate.
 She is coming, my dove, my dear;
 She is coming, my life, my fate.
 The red rose cries, "She is near, she is near;"
 And the white rose weeps, "She is late;"
 The larkspur listens, "I hear, I hear;"
 And the lily whispers, "I wait."

20

XI

She is coming, my own, my sweet;
 Were it ever so airy a tread,
 My heart would hear her and beat,
 Were it earth in an earthy bed;
 My dust would hear her and beat,
 Had I lain for a century dead;
 Would start and tremble under her feet,
 And blossom in purple and red.

30

XXIII

I

“The fault was mine, the fault was mine”—
Why am I sitting here so stunn’d and still,
Plucking the harmless wild-flower on the hill?—
It is this guilty hand!—
And there rises ever a passionate cry
From underneath the darkening land—
What is it that has been done?
O dawn of Eden bright over earth and sky,
The fires of Hell brake out of thy rising sun,
The fires of Hell and of Hate; 10
For she, sweet soul, had hardly spoken a word,
When her brother ran in his rage to the gate,
He came with the babe-faced lord;
Heap’d on her terms of disgrace,
And while she wept, and I strove to be cool,
He fiercely gave me the lie,
Till I with as fierce an anger spoke,
And he struck me, madman, over the face,
Struck me before the languid fool,
Who was gaping and grinning by: 20
Struck for himself an evil stroke;
Wrought for his house an irredeemable woe;
For front to front in an hour we stood,
And a million horrible bellowing echoes broke
From the red-ribb’d hollow behind the wood,
And thunder’d up into Heaven the Christless code,
That must have life for a blow.
Ever and ever afresh they seem’d to grow.
Was it he lay there with a fading eye?
“The fault was mine,” he whisper’d, “fly!” 30
Then glided out of the joyous wood
The ghastly Wraith of one that I know;
And there rang on a sudden a passionate cry,
A cry for a brother’s blood:
It will ring in my heart and my ears, till I die, till
I die.

II

Is it gone? my pulses beat—
 What was it? a lying trick of the brain?
 Yet I thought I saw her stand,
 A shadow there at my feet,
 High over the shadowy land.
 It is gone; and the heavens fall in a gentle rain,
 When they should burst and drown with deluging
 storms
 The feeble vassals of wine and anger and lust,
 The little hearts that know not how to forgive.
 Arise, my God, and strike, for we hold Thee just, 10
 Strike dead the whole weak race of venomous
 worms,
 That sting each other here in the dust;
 We are not worthy to live.

XXIV

. I

See what a lovely shell,
 Small and pure as a pearl,
 Lying close to my foot,
 Frail, but a work divine,
 Made so fairly well
 With delicate spire and whorl
 How exquisitely minute,
 A miracle of design! 20

II

What is it? a learned man
 Could give it a clumsy name.
 Let him name it who can,
 The beauty would be the same.

III

The tiny cell is forlorn,
 Void of the little living will

That made it stir on the shore.
 Did he stand at the diamond door
 Of his house in a rainbow frill?
 Did he push, when he was uncurl'd,
 A golden foot or a fairy horn
 Through his dim water-world?

IV

Slight, to be crush'd with a tap
 Of my finger-nail on the sand;
 Small, but a work divine;
 Frail, but of force to withstand, 10
 Year upon year, the shock
 Of cataract seas that snap
 The three-decker's oaken spine
 Athwart the ledges of rock,
 Here on the Breton strand!

V

Breton, not Briton; here
 Like a shipwreck'd man on a coast
 Of ancient fable and fear—
 Plagued with a flitting to and fro,
 A disease, a hard mechanic ghost 20
 That never came from on high
 Nor ever arose from below
 But only moves with the moving eye,
 Flying along the land and the main—
 Why should it look like Maud?
 Am I to be overawed
 By what I cannot but know
 Is a juggle born of the brain?

VI

Back from the Breton coast,
 Sick of a nameless fear, 30
 Back to the dark sea-line
 Looking, thinking of all I have lost;

An old song vexes my ear;
But that of Lamech is mine.

VII

For years, a measureless ill,
For years, for ever, to part—
But she, she would love me still;
And as long, O God, as she
Have a grain of love for me,
So long, no doubt, no doubt,
Shall I nurse in my dark heart,
However weary, a spark of will
Not to be trampled out.

10

VIII

Strange, that the mind, when fraught
With a passion so intense
One would think that it well
Might drown all life in the eye,—
That it should, by being so overwrought,
Suddenly strike on a sharper sense
For a shell, or a flower, little things
Which else would have been pass'd by!
And now I remember, I,
When he lay dying there,
I noticed one of his many rings
(For he had many, poor worm) and thought
It is his mother's hair.

20

IX

Who knows if he be dead?
Whether I need have fled?
Am I guilty of blood?
However this may be,
Comfort her, comfort her, all things good,
While I am over the sea!
Let me and my passionate love go by,
But speak to her all things holy and high,
Whatever happen to me!

30

Me and my harmful love go by;
But come to her waking, find her asleep,
Powers of the height, Powers of the deep,
And comfort her though I die.

XXV

Courage, poor heart of stone!
I will not ask thee why
Thou canst not understand
That thou art left for ever alone:
Courage, poor stupid heart of stone.—
Or if I ask thee why, 10
Care not thou to reply:
She is but dead, and the time is at hand
When thou shalt more than die.

XXVI

I

O that 'twere possible
After long grief and pain
To find the arms of my true love
Round me once again!

II

When I was wont to meet her
In the silent woody places
By the home that gave me birth, 20
We stood tranced in long embraces
Mix'd with kisses sweeter, sweeter
Than anything on earth.

III

A shadow flits before me
Not thou, but like to thee;
Ah, Christ, that it were possible
For one short hour to see

The souls we loved, that they might tell us
What and where they be.

IV

It leads me forth at evening,
It lightly winds and steals
In a cold white robe before me,
When all my spirit reels
At the shouts, the leagues of lights
And the roaring of the wheels.

V

Half the night I waste in sighs,
Half in dreams I sorrow after
The delight of early skies;
In a wakeful doze I sorrow
For the hand, the lips, the eyes,
For the meeting of the morrow,
The delight of happy laughter,
The delight of low replies.

10

VI

'Tis a morning pure and sweet,
And a dewy splendour falls
On the little flower that clings
To the turrets and the walls;
'Tis a morning pure and sweet,
And the light and shadow fleet;
She is walking in the meadow,
And the woodland echo rings;
In a moment we shall meet;
She is singing in the meadow,
And the rivulet at her feet
Ripples on in light and shadow
To the ballad that she sings.

20

VII

Do I hear her sing as of old,
My bird with the shining head,

30

My own dove with the tender eye?
But there rings on a sudden a passionate cry,
There is some one dying or dead,
And a sullen thunder is roll'd;
For a tumult shakes the city,
And I wake, my dream is fled;
In the shuddering dawn, behold,
Without knowledge, without pity,
By the curtains of my bed
That abiding phantom cold.

10

VIII

Get thee hence, nor come again.
Mix not memory with doubt,
Pass, thou deathlike type of pain,
Pass, and cease to move about!
'Tis the blot upon the brain
That *will* show itself without.

IX

Then I rise, the eavedrops fall,
And the yellow vapours choke
The great city sounding wide;
The day comes, a dull red ball
Wrapt in drifts of lurid smoke
On the misty river-tide.

20

X

Through the hubbub of the market
I steal, a wasted frame,
It crosses here, it crosses there,
Through all that crowd confused and loud,
The shadow still the same;
And on my heavy eyelids
My anguish hangs like shame.

XI

Alas for her that met me,
That heard me softly call,
Came glimmering through the laurels
At the quiet evenfall,
In the garden by the turrets
Of the old manorial hall.

XII

Would the happy spirit descend,
From the realms of light and song,
In the chamber or the street,
As she looks among the blest,
Should I fear to greet my friend
Or to say, "Forgive the wrong,"
Or to ask her, "Take me, sweet,
To the regions of thy rest"?

10

XIII

But the broad light glares and beats,
And the shadow flits and fleets,
And will not let me be;
And I loathe the squares and streets,
And the faces that one meets,
Hearts with no love for me:
Always I long to creep
Into some still cavern deep,
There to weep, and weep, and weep
My whole soul out to thee.

20

XXVII

I

Dead, long dead,
Long dead!
And my heart is a handful of dust,
And the wheels go over my head,

And my bones are shaken with pain,
For into a shallow grave they are thrust,
Only a yard beneath the street,
And the hoofs of the horses beat, beat,
The hoofs of the horses beat,
Beat into my scalp and my brain,
With never an end to the stream of passing feet,
Driving, hurrying, marrying, burying,
Clamour and rumble, and ringing and clatter;
And here beneath it is all as bad, 10
For I thought the dead had peace, but it is not so:
To have no peace in the grave, is that not sad?
But up and down and to and fro,
Ever about me the dead men go;
And then to hear a dead man chatter
Is enough to drive one mad.

II

Wretchedest age, since Time began,
They cannot even bury a man;
And though we paid our tithes in the days that are
gone,
Not a bell was rung, not a prayer was read; 20
It is that which makes us loud in the world of the
dead;
There is none that does his work, not one;
A touch of their office might have suffic'd,
But the churchmen fain would kill their church,
As the churches have kill'd their Christ.

III

See, there is one of us sobbing,
No limit to his distress;
And another, a lord of all things, praying
To his own great self, as I guess;
And another, a statesman there, betraying 30
His party-secret, fool, to the press;
And yonder a vile physician, blabbing
The case of his patient—all for what?
To tickle the maggot born in an empty head,

And wheedle a world that loves him not,
For it is but a world of the dead.

IV

Nothing but idiot gabble!
For the prophecy given of old,
And then not understood,
Has come to pass as foretold;
Not let any man think for the public good,
But babble, merely for babble.
For I never whisper'd a private affair
Within the hearing of cat or mouse, 10
No, not to myself in the closet alone,
But I heard it shouted at once from the top of the
house;
Everything came to be known.
Who told *him* we were there?

V

Not that gray old wolf, for he came not back
From the wilderness, full of wolves, where he used
to lie;
He has gather'd the bones for his o'ergrown whelp
to crack;
Crack them now for yourself, and howl, and die.

VI

Prophet, curse me the blabbing lip,
And curse me the British vermin, the rat; 20
I know not whether he came in the Hanover ship,
But I know that he lies and listens mute
In an ancient mansion's crannies and holes:
Arsenic, arsenic, sure, would do it,
Except that now we poison our babes, poor souls!
It is all used up for that.

VII

Tell him now ; she is standing here at my head ;
Not beautiful now, not even kind ;
He may take her now ; for she never speaks her
mind,
But is ever the one thing silent here.
She is not of us, as I divine ;
She comes from another stiller world of the dead,
Stiller, not fairer than mine.

VIII

But I know where a garden grows,
Fairer than aught in the world beside,
All made up of the lily and rose 10
That blow by night, when the season is good,
To the sound of dancing music and flutes :
It is only flowers, they had no fruits,
And I almost fear they are not roses, but blood ;
For the keeper was one, so full of pride,
He link'd a dead man there to a spectral bride ;
For he, if he had not been a Sultan of brutes,
Would he have that hole in his side ?

IX

But what will the old man say ?
He laid a cruel snare in a pit 20
To catch a friend of mine one stormy day ;
Yet now I could even weep to think of it ;
For what will the old man say
When he comes to the second corpse in the pit ?

X

Friend, to be struck by the public foe,
Then to strike him and lay him low,
That were a public merit, far,
Whatever the Quaker holds, from sin ;
But the red life spilt for a private blow—

I swear to you, lawful and lawless war
Are scarcely even akin.

XI

O me, why have they not buried me deep enough?
Is it kind to have made me a grave so rough—
Me, that was never a quiet sleeper?
Maybe still I am but half dead;
Then I cannot be wholly dumb:
I will cry to the steps above my head,
And somebody, surely, some kind heart will come
To bury me, bury me 10
Deeper, ever so little deeper.

XXVIII

I

My life has crept so long on a broken wing
Through cells of madness, haunts of horror and
fear,
That I come to be grateful at last for a little thing:
My mood is changed, for it fell at a time of year
When the face of night is fair on the dewy downs,
And the shining daffodil dies, and the Charioteer
And starry Gemini hang like glorious crowns
Over Orion's grave low down in the west,
That like a silent lightning under the stars 20
She seem'd to divide in a dream from a band of the
blest,
And spoke of a hope for the world in the coming
wars—
“And in that hope, dear soul, let trouble have rest,
Knowing I tarry for thee,” and pointed to Mars
As he glow'd like a ruddy shield on the Lion's breast.

II

And it was but a dream, yet it yielded a dear delight
To have look'd, though but in a dream, upon eyes
so fair,

That had been in a weary world my one thing bright;
 And it was but a dream, yet it lighten'd my despair
 When I thought that a war would arise in defence of
 the right,

That an iron tyranny now should bend or cease,
 The glory of manhood stand on his ancient height,
 Nor Britain's one sole God be the millionaire:
 No more shall commerce be all in all, and Peace
 Pipe on her pastoral hillock a languid note,
 And watch her harvest ripen, her herd increase,
 Nor the cannon-bullet rust on a slothful shore, 10
 And the cobweb woven across the cannon's throat
 Shall shake its threaded tears in the wind no more.

III

And as months ran on and rumour of battle grew,
 "It is time, it is time, O passionate heart," said I
 (For I cleaved to a cause that I felt to be pure and
 true),

"It is time, O passionate heart and morbid eye,
 That old hysterical mock-disease should die."
 And I stood on a giant deck and mix'd my breath
 With a loyal people shouting a battle-cry,
 Till I saw the dreary phantom arise and fly 20
 Far into the North, and battle, and seas of death.

IV

Let it go or stay, so I wake to the higher aims
 Of a land that has lost for a little her lust of gold,
 And love of a peace that was full of wrongs and
 shames,

Horrible, hateful, monstrous, not to be told;
 And hail once more to the banner of battle unroll'd!
 Though many a light shall darken, and many shall
 weep

For those that are crush'd in the clash of jarring
 claims,

Yet God's just wrath shall be wreak'd on a giant
 liar;

And many a darkness into the light shall leap, 30

And shine in the sudden making of splendid names,
 And noble thought be freer under the sun,
 And the heart of a people beat with one desire;
 For the peace, that I deem'd no peace, is over and
 done,
 And now by the side of the Black and the Baltic
 deep,
 And deathful-grinning mouths of the fortress,
 flames
 The blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire.

v

Let it flame or fade, and the war roll down like a
 wind,
 We have proved we have hearts in a cause, we are
 noble still,
 And myself have awaked, as it seems, to the better 10
 mind;
 It is better to fight for the good, than to rail at
 the ill;
 I have felt with my native land, I am one with my
 kind,
 I embrace the purpose of God and the doom as-
 sign'd.

TITHONUS

The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
 The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,
 Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
 And after many a summer dies the swan.
 Me only cruel immortality
 Consumes: I wither slowly in thine arms,
 Here at the quiet limit of the world,
 A white-hair'd shadow roaming like a dream
 The ever-silent spaces of the East,
 Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of morn.

20

Alas! for this gray shadow, once a man—
 So glorious in his beauty and thy choice,

Who madest him thy chosen, that he seem'd
To his great heart none other than a God!
I ask'd thee, "Give me immortality".
Then didst thou grant mine asking with a smile,
Like wealthy men who care not how they give.
But thy strong Hours indignant work'd their wills,
And beat me down and marr'd and wasted me,
And tho' they could not end me, left me maim'd
To dwell in presence of immortal youth,
Immortal age beside immortal youth, 10
And all I was, in ashes. Can thy love,
Thy beauty, make amends, tho' even now,
Close over us, the silver star, thy guide,
Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill with tears
To hear me? Let me go: take back thy gift:
Why should a man desire in any way
To vary from the kindly race of men,
Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
Where all should pause, as is most meet for all?

A soft air fans the cloud apart; there comes 20
A glimpse of that dark world where I was born
Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals
From thy pure brows, and from thy shoulders pure,
And bosom beating with a heart renew'd.
Thy cheek begins to redden through the gloom,
Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to mine,
Ere yet they blind the stars, and the wild team
Which love thee, yearning for thy yoke, arise,
And shake the darkness from their loosen'd manes,
And beat the twilight into flakes of fire. 30
Lo! ever thus thou growest beautiful
In silence, then before thine answer given
Departed, and thy tears are on my cheek.

Why wilt thou ever scare me with thy tears,
And make me tremble lest a saying learnt,
In days far-off, on that dark earth, be true?
"The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts."
Ay me! ay me! with what another heart
In days far-off, and with what other eyes

I used to watch—if I be he that watch'd—
 The lucid outline forming round thee; saw
 The dim curls kindle into sunny rings;
 Changed with thy mystic change, and felt my blood
 Glow with the glow that slowly crimson'd all
 Thy presence and thy portals, while I lay,
 Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-warm
 With kisses balmier than half-opening buds
 Of April, and could hear the lips that kiss'd
 Whispering I knew not what of wild and sweet, 10
 Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing,
 While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

Yet hold me not for ever in thine East:
 How can my nature longer mix with thine?
 Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold
 Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled feet
 Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when the steam
 Floats up from those dim fields about the homes
 Of happy men that have the power to die
 And grassy barrows of the happier dead. 20
 Release me, and restore me to the ground;
 Thou seest all things, thou wilt see my grave:
 Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn;
 I earth in earth forget these empty courts,
 And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

IN THE VALLEY OF CAUTERETZ

All along the valley, stream that flashest white,
 Deepening thy voice, with the deepening of the night,
 All along the valley, where thy waters flow,
 I walk'd with one I loved two and thirty years ago.
 All along the valley, while I walk'd today, 30
 The two and thirty years were a mist that rolls
 away;
 For all along the valley, down thy rocky bed,
 Thy living voice to me was as the voice of the dead,
 And all along the valley, by rock and cave and tree,
 The voice of the dead was a living voice to me.

BOADICEA

While about the shore of Mona those Neronian
legionaries
Burnt and broke the grove and altar of the Druid
and Druidess,
Far in the East Boadicea, standing loftily charioted,
Mad and maddening all that heard her in her fierce
volubility,
Girt by half the tribes of Britain, near the colony
Camulodune,
Yell'd and shriek'd between her daughters o'er a wild
confederacy.

“They that scorn the tribes and call us Britain’s
barbarous populaces,
Did they hear me, would they listen, did they pity
me supplicating?
Shall I heed them in their anguish? shall I brook to
be supplicated?
Hear Icenian, Catieuchlanian, hear Coritanian, Trin- 10
obant!
Must their ever-ravening eagle’s beak and talon an-
nihilate us?
Tear the noble heart of Britain, leave it gorily
quivering?
Bark an answer, Britain’s raven! bark and blacken
innumerable,
Blacken round the Roman carrion, make the car-
case a skeleton,
Kite and kestrel, wolf and wolfkin, from the wilder-
ness, wallow in it,
Till the face of Bel be brighten’d, Taranis be
propitiated.
Lo their colony half-defended! lo their colony, Ca-
mulodune!
There the horde of Roman robbers mock at a bar-
barous adversary.
There the hive of Roman liars worship a gluttonous
emperor-idiot.

Such is Rome, and this her deity: hear it, Spirit of
Cassivelaun!

“Hear it, Gods! the Gods have heard it, O Icenian,
Coritanian!
Doubt not ye the Gods have answer'd, Catieuchla-
nian, Trinobant.
These have told us all their anger in miraculous
utterances,
Thunder, a flying fire in heaven, a murmur heard
aerially,
Phantom sound of blows descending, moan of an
enemy massacred,
Phantom wail of women and children, multitudinous
agonies.
Bloodily flow'd the Tamesa rolling phantom bodies
of horses and men;
Then a phantom colony smoulder'd on the reflux
estuary;
Lastly yonder yester-even, suddenly giddily totter- 10
ing—
There was one who watch'd and told me—down their
statue of Victory fell.
Lo their precious Roman bantling, lo the colony
Camulodune,
Shall we teach a Roman lesson? shall we care to be
pitiful?
Shall we deal with it as an infant? shall we dandle
it amorously?

“Hear Icenian, Catieuchlanian, hear Coritanian,
Trinobant!
While I roved about the forest, long and bitterly
meditating,
There I heard them in the darkness, at the mystical
ceremony,
Loosely robed in flying raiment, sang the terrible
prophetesses,
‘Fear not, isle of blowing woodland, isle of silvery
parapets!
Tho’ the Roman eagle shadow thee, tho’ the gather- 20
ing enemy narrow thee,

Thou shalt wax and he shall dwindle, thou shalt be
the mighty one yet!
Thine the liberty, thine the glory, thine the deeds to
be celebrated,
Thine the myriad-rolling ocean, light and shadow
illimitable,
Thine the lands of lasting summer, many-blossoming
Paradises,
Thine the North and thine the South and thine the
battle-thunder of God,'
So they chanted: how shall Britain light upon augu-
ries happier?
So they chanted in the darkness, and there cometh
a victory now.

“Hear Icenian, Catieuchlanian, hear Coritanian,
Trinobant!
Me the wife of rich Prasutagus, me the lover of
liberty,
Me they seized and me they tortured, me they lash'd 10
and humiliated,
Me the sport of ribald Veterans, mine of ruffian
violators!
See they sit, they hide their faces, miserable in
ignominy!
Wherefore in me burns an anger, not by blood to be
satiated.
Lo the palaces and the temple, lo the colony Camulo-
dune!
There they ruled, and thence they wasted all the
flourishing territory,
Thither at their will they haled the yellow-ringleted
Britoness—
Bloodily, bloodily fall the battle-axe, unexhausted,
inexorable.
Shout Icenian, Catieuchlanian, shout Coritanian,
Trinobant,
Till the victim hear within and yearn to hurry pre-
cipitously
Like the leaf in a roaring whirlwind, like the smoke 20
in a hurricane whirl'd.

Lo the colony, there they rioted in the city of Cuno-
beline!
There they drank in cups of emerald, there at tables
of ebony lay,
Rolling on their purple couches in their tender ef-
feminacy.
There they dwelt and there they rioted; there—there
—they dwell no more.
Burst the gates, and burn the palaces, break the
works of the statuary,
Take the hoary Roman head and shatter it, hold it
abominable,
Cut the Roman boy to pieces in his lust and volup-
tuousness,
Lash the maiden into swooning, me they lash'd and
humiliated,
Chop the breasts from off the mother, dash the
brains of the little one out,
Up my Britons, on my chariot, on my chargers, 10
trample them under us."

So the Queen Boadicea, standing loftily charioted,
Brandishing in her hand a dart and rolling glances
lioness-like,
Yell'd and shriek'd between her daughters in her
fierce volubility,
Till her people all around the royal chariot agitated,
Madly dash'd the darts together, writhing barbarous
lineaments,
Made the noise of frosty woodlands, when they
shiver in January,
Roar'd as when the roaring breakers boom and
blanch on the precipices,
Yell'd as when the winds of winter tear an oak on a
promontory.
So the silent colony hearing her tumultuous adver-
saries
Clash the darts and on the buckler beat with rapid 20
unanimous hand,
Thought on all her evil tyrannies, all her pitiless
avarice,

Till she felt the heart within her fall and flutter
tremulously,
Then her pulses at the clamouring of her enemy
fainted away.
Out of evil evil flourishes, out of tyranny tyranny
buds.
Ran the land with Roman slaughter, multitudinous
agonies.
Perish'd many a maid and matron, many a valorous
legionary,
Fell the colony, city, and citadel, London, Verulam,
Camulodune.

WAGES

Glory of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,
Paid with a voice flying by to be lost on endless
sea—
Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the
wrong—
Nay, but she aim'd not at glory, no lover of glory ¹⁰
she:
Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.

The wages of sin is death: if the wages of Virtue be
dust,
Would she have heart to endure for the life of the
worm and the fly?
She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of
the just,
To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer
sky:
Give her the wages of going on, and not to die.

THE HIGHER PANTHEISM

The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and
the plains—
Are not these, O soul, the Vision of Him who
reigns?

Is not the Vision He? tho' He be not that which He
seems?

Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live
in dreams?

Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and
limb,
Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from
Him?

Dark is the world to thee: thyself art the reason
why;
For is He not all but thou that hast power to feel "I
am I"?

Glory about thee, without thee; and thou fulfillest
thy doom
Making Him broken gleams, and a stifled splendour
and gloom.

Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with
Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands 10
and feet.

God is law, say the wise; O soul, and let us rejoice,
For if He thunder by law the thunder is yet His
voice.

Law is God, say some: no God at all, says the fool;
For all we have power to see is a straight staff bent
in a pool;

And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man
cannot see;
But if we could see and hear, this Vision—were it
not He?

FLOWER IN THE CRANNIED WALL

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,

IN THE GARDEN AT SWAINSTON 321

I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

THE BRIDESMAID

O Bridesmaid, ere the happy knot was tied,
Thine eyes so wept that they could hardly see;
Thy sister smiled and said, "No tears for me!
A happy bridesmaid makes a happy bride."
And then, the couple standing side by side,
Love lighted down between them full of glee, 10
And over his left shoulder laugh'd at thee,
"O happy bridesmaid, make a happy bride."
And all at once a pleasant truth I learn'd,
For while the tender service made thee weep,
I loved thee for the tear thou couldst not hide,
And prest thy hand, and knew the press return'd,
And thought, "My life is sick of single sleep:
O happy bridesmaid, make a happy bride!"

IN THE GARDEN AT SWAINSTON

Nightingales warbled without,
Within was weeping for thee: 20
Shadows of three dead men
Walk'd in the walks with me,
Shadows of three dead men and thou wast one of
the three.

Nightingales sang in his woods:
The Master was far away:
Nightingales warbled and sang
Of a passion that lasts but a day;
Still in the house in his coffin the Prince of courtesy
lay

Two dead men have I known
In courtesy like to thee: 30
Two dead men have I loved

With a love that will ever be:
Three dead men have I loved and thou art last of
the three.

THE VOICE AND THE PEAK

I

The voice and the Peak
Far over summit and lawn,
The lone glow and long roar
Green-rushing from the rosy thrones of dawn!

II

All night have I heard the voice
Rave over the rocky bar,
But thou wert silent in heaven,
Above thee glided the star.

10

III

Hast thou no voice, O Peak,
That standest high above all?
"I am the voice of the Peak,
I roar and rave for I fall.

IV

"A thousand voices go
To North, South, East, and West;
They leave the heights and are troubled,
And moan and sink to their rest.

V

"The fields are fair beside them,
The chestnut towers in his bloom;
But they—they feel the desire of the deep—
Fall, and follow their doom.

20

VI

"The deep has power on the height,
And the height has power on the deep;
They are raised for ever and ever,
And sink again into sleep."

VII

Not raised for ever and ever,
But when their cycle is o'er,
The valley, the voice, the Peak, the star
Pass, and are found no more.

VIII

The Peak is high and flush'd
At his highest with sunrise fire; 10
The Peak is high, and the stars are high,
And the thought of a man is higher.

IX

A deep below the deep,
And a height beyond the height.
Our hearing is not hearing
And our seeing is not sight.

X

The voice and the Peak
Far over summit and lawn,
The lone glow and long roar
Green-rushing from the rosy thrones of dawn! 20

A BALLAD OF THE FLEET

I

At Flores in the Azores Sir Richard Grenville lay,
And a pinnacle, like a flutter'd bird, came flying
from far away:

"Spanish ships of war at sea! we have sighted fifty-three!"

Then sware Lord Thomas Howard: "'Fore God I am no coward;

But I cannot meet them here, for my ships are out of gear,

And the half my men are sick. I must fly, but follow quick.

We are six ships of the line; can we fight with fifty-three?"

II

Then spake Sir Richard Grenville: "I know you are no coward;

You fly them for a moment to fight with them again. But I've ninety men and more that are lying sick ashore.

I should count myself the coward if I left them, my Lord Howard,

To these Inquisition dogs and the devildoms of 10 Spain."

III

So Lord Howard past away with five ships of war that day,

Till he melted like a cloud in the silent summer heaven;

But Sir Richard bore in hand all his sick men from the land

Very carefully and slow,

Men of Bideford in Devon,

And we laid them on the ballast down below;

For we brought them all aboard,

And they blest him in their pain, that they were not left to Spain,

To the thumbscrew and the stake, for the glory of the Lord.

IV

He had only a hundred seamen to work the ship and 20 to fight,

And he sailed away from Flores till the Spaniard
 came in sight,
 With his huge sea-castles heaving upon the weather
 bow.

"Shall we fight or shall we fly?
 Good Sir Richard, tell us now,
 For to fight is but to die!
 There'll be little of us left by the time this sun be
 set."

And Sir Richard said again: "We be all good Eng-
 lish men.

Let us bang these dogs of Seville, the children of the
 devil,

For I never turn'd my back upon Don or devil yet."

V

Sir Richard spoke and he laugh'd, and we roar'd 10
 a hurrah, and so

The little Revenge ran on sheer into the heart of the
 foe,

With her hundred fighters on deck, and her ninety
 sick below;

For half of their fleet to the right and half to the
 left, were seen,

And the little Revenge ran on thro' the long sea-lane
 between.

VI

Thousands of their soldiers look'd down from their
 decks and laugh'd,

Thousands of their seamen made mock at the mad
 little craft

Running on and on, till delay'd

By their mountain-like San Philip that, of fifteen
 hundred tons,

And up-shadowing high above us with her yawning
 tiers of guns,

Took the breath from our sails, and we stay'd.

VII

And while now the great San Philip hung above
us like a cloud
Whence the thunderbolt will fall
Long and loud,
Four galleons drew away
From the Spanish fleet that day,
And two upon the larboard and two upon the star-
board lay,
And the battle-thunder broke from them all.

VIII

But anon the great San Philip, she bethought herself
and went
Having that within her womb that had left her ill
content;
And the rest they came aboard us, and they fought 10
us hand to hand,
For a dozen times they came with their pikes and
musqueteers,
And a dozen times we shook 'em off as a dog that
shakes his ears
When he leaps from the water to the land.

IX

And the sun went down, and the stars came out far
over the summer sea,
But never a moment ceased the fight of the one and
the fifty-three.
Ship after ship, the whole night long, the high-built
galleons came,
Ship after ship, the whole night long, with her battle-
thunder and flame;
Ship after ship, the whole night long, drew back
with her dead and her shame.
For some were sunk and many were shatter'd, and
so could fight us no more—

God of battles, was ever a battle like this in the world
before?

X

For he said "Fight on! fight on!"
Tho' his vessel was all but a wreck;
And it chanced that, when half of the short summer
night was gone,
With a grisly wound to be drest he had left the deck,
But a bullet struck him that was dressing it suddenly
dead,
And himself he was wounded again in the side and
the head.
And he said "Fight on! fight on!"

XI

And the night went down, and the sun smiled out
far over the summer sea,
And the Spanish fleet with broken sides lay round 10
us all in a ring;
But they dared not touch us again, for they fear'd
that we still could sting,
So they watch'd what the end would be
And we had not fought them in vain,
But in perilous plight were we,
Seeing forty of our poor hundred were slain,
And half of the rest of us maim'd for life
In the crash of the cannonade and the desperate
strife;
And the sick men down in the hold were most of
them stark and cold,
And the pikes were all broken or bent, and the
powder was all of it spent;
And the masts and the rigging were lying over the 20
side;
But Sir Richard cried in his English pride,
"We have fought such a fight for a day and a night
As may never be fought again!
We have won great glory, my men!
And a day less or more

At sea or ashore,
We die—does it matter when?
Sink me the ship, Master Gunner—sink her, split
her in twain!
Fall into the hands of God, not into the hands of
Spain!”

XII

And the gunner said “Ay, ay,” but the seamen made
reply:
“We have children, we have wives,
And the Lord hath spared our lives.
We will make the Spaniard promise, if we yield, to
let us go;
We shall live to fight again and to strike another
blow.”
And the lion there lay dying, and they yielded to 10
the foe.

XIII

And the stately Spanish men to their flagship bore
him then,
Where they laid him by the mast, old Sir Richard
caught at last,
And they praised him to his face with their courtly
foreign grace;
But he rose upon their decks, and he cried:
“I have fought for Queen and Faith like a valiant
man and true;
I have only done my duty as a man is bound to do:
With a joyful spirit I Sir Richard Grenville die!”
And he fell upon their decks, and he died.

XIV

And they stared at the dead that had been so valiant
and true,
And had holden the power and glory of Spain so
cheap

That he dared her with one little ship and his Eng-
lish few;
Was he devil or man? He was devil for aught they
knew,
But they sank his body with honour down into the
deep,
And they mann'd the Revenge with a swarthier alien
crew,
And away she sail'd with her loss and long'd for
her own;
When a wind from the lands they had ruin'd awoke
from sleep,
And the water began to heave and the weather to
moan,
And or ere that evening ended a great gale blew,
And a wave like the wave that is raised by an earth-
quake grew,
Till it smote on their hulls and their sails and their ¹⁰
masts and their flags,
And the whole sea plunged and fell on the shot-shat-
ter'd navy of Spain,
And the little Revenge herself went down by the
island crags
To be lost evermore in the main.

RIZPAH

I

Wailing, wailing, wailing, the wind over land and
sea—
And Willy's voice in the wind, "O mother come out
to me."
Why should he call me to-night, when he knows
that I cannot go?
For the downs are as bright as day, and the full
moon stares at the snow.

II

We should be seen, my dear; they would spy us out
of the town.

The loud black nights for us, and the storm rushing
 over the down,
When I cannot see my own hand, but am led by the
 creak of the chain,
And grovel and grope for my son till I find myself
 drenched with the rain.

III

Anything fallen again? nay—what was there left to
 fall?
I have taken them home, I have number'd the bones,
 I have hidden them all.
What am I saying? and what are *you*? do you come
 as a spy?
Falls? what falls? who knows? As the tree falls so
 must it lie.

IV

Who let her in? how long has she been? you—what
 have you heard?
Why did you sit so quiet? you never have spoken a
 word.
O—to pray with me—yes—a—lady—none of their 10
 spies—
But the night has crept into my heart and begun to
 darken my eyes.

V

Ah—you, that have lived so soft, what should *you*
 know of the night,
The blast and the burning shame and the bitter frost
 and the fright?
I have done it, while you were asleep—you were
 only made for the day.
I have gather'd my baby together—and now you
 may go your way.

VI

Nay—for it's kind of you, Madam, to sit by an old
dying wife.

But say nothing hard of my boy, I have only an
hour of life.

I kiss'd my boy in the prison, before he went out
to die.

"They dared me to do it," he said, and he never has
told me a lie.

I whipt him for robbing an orchard once when he
was but a child—

"The farmer dared me to do it," he said; he was al-
ways so wild—

And idle—and couldn't be idle—my Willy—he never
could rest.

The King should have made him a soldier, he would
have been one of his best.

VII

But he lived with a lot of wild mates, and they
never would let him be good;

They swore that he dare not rob the mail, and he 10
swore that he would;

And he took no life, but he took one purse, and
when all was done

He flung it among his fellows—"I'll none of it," said
my son.

VIII

I came into court to the Judge and the lawyers. I
told them my tale,

God's own truth—but they kill'd him, they kill'd
him for robbing the mail.

They hang'd him in chains for a show—we had al-
ways borne a good name—

To be hang'd for a thief—and then put away—isn't
that enough shame?

Dust to dust—low down—let us hide! but they set
him so high
That all the ships of the world could stare at him,
passing by.
God 'ill pardon the hell-black raven and horrible
fowls of the air,
But not the black heart of the lawyer who kill'd him
and hang'd him there.

IX

And the jailer forced me away. I had bid him my
last goodbye;
They had fasten'd the door of his cell. "O mother!"
I heard him cry.
I couldn't get back tho' I tried, he had something
further to say,
And now I never shall know it. The jailer forced
me away.

X

Then since I couldn't but hear that cry of my boy
that was dead,
They seized me and shut me up: they fasten'd me 10
down on my bed.
"Mother, O mother!"—he call'd in the dark to me
year after year—
They beat me for that, they beat me—you know
that I couldn't but hear;
And then at the last they found I had grown so
stupid and still
They let me abroad again—but the creatures had
worked their will.

XI

Flesh of my flesh was gone, but bone of my bone
was left—
I stole them all from the lawyers—and you, will you
call it a theft?—

My baby, the bones that had suck'd me, the bones
that had laugh'd and had cried—
Theirs? O no! they are mine—not theirs—they
had moved in my side.

XII

Do you think I was scared by the bones? I kiss'd
'em, I buried 'em all—
I can't dig deep, I am old—in the night by the
churchyard wall.
My Willy 'ill rise up whole when the trumpet of
judgment 'ill sound;
But I charge you never to say that I laid him in
holy ground.

XIII

They would scratch him up—they would hang him
again on the cursed tree.
Sin? O yes—we are sinners, I know—let all that be,
And read me a Bible verse of the Lord's good will
toward men—
“Full of compassion and mercy, the Lord”—let me 10
hear it again;
“Full of compassion and mercy—long-suffering.”
Yes, O yes!
For the lawyer is born but to murder—the Saviour
lives but to bless.
He'll never put on the black cap except for the worst
of the worst,
And the first may be last—I have heard it in church
—and the last may be first.
Suffering—O long-suffering—yes, as the Lord must
know,
Year after year in the mist and the wind and the
shower and the snow.

XIV

Heard, have you? what? they have told you he never
repented his sin.

How do they know it? are *they* his mother? are *you*
 of his kin?
 Heard! have you ever heard, when the storm on the
 downs began
 The wind that 'ill wail like a child and the sea that
 'ill moan like a man?

XV

Election, Election and Reprobation—it's all very
 well,
 But I go to-night to my boy, and I shall not find him
 in Hell.
 For I cared so much for my boy that the Lord has
 look'd into my care,
 And He means me I'm sure to be happy with Willy,
 I know not where.

XVI

And if *he* be lost—but to save *my* soul, that is all
 your desire:
 Do you think that I care for *my* soul if my boy be
 gone to the fire?
 I have been with God in the dark—go, go, you may 10
 leave me alone—
 You never have borne a child—you are just as hard
 as a stone.

XVII

Madam, I beg your pardon! I think that you mean
 to be kind,
 But I cannot hear what you say for my Willy's voice
 in the wind—
 The snow and the sky so bright—he used but to call
 in the dark,
 And he calls to me now from the church and not
 from the gibbet—for hark!
 Nay—you can hear it yourself—it is coming—shak-
 ing the walls—

Willy—the moon's in a cloud—Good-night. I am going. He calls.

DE PROFUNDIS

THE TWO GREETINGS

I

Out of the deep, my child, out of the deep,
Where all that was to be, in all that was,
Whirl'd for a million æons thro' the vast
Waste dawn of multitudinous-eddy light—
Out of the deep, my child, out of the deep,
Thro' all this changing world of changeless law,
And every phase of ever-heightening life,
And nine long months of antenatal gloom,
With this last moon, this crescent—her dark orb 10
Touch'd with earth's light—thou comest, darling
boy;

Our own; a babe in lineament and limb
Perfect, and prophet of the perfect man;
Whose face and form are hers and mine in one,
Indissolubly married like our love;
Live, and be happy in thyself, and serve
This mortal race thy kin so well, that men
May bless thee as we bless thee, O young life
Breaking with laughter from the dark; and may
The fated channel where thy motion lives 20
Be prosperously shaped, and sway thy course
Along the years of haste and random youth
Unshatter'd; then full-current thro' full man;
And last in kindly curves, with gentlest fall,
By quiet fields, a slowly-dying power,
To that last deep where we and thou are still.

II

I

Out of the deep, my child, out of the deep,
From that great deep, before our world begins,

Whereon the Spirit of God moves as he will—
 Out of the deep, my child, out of the deep,
 From that true world within the world we see,
 Whereof our world is but the bounding shore—
 Out of the deep, Spirit, out of the deep,
 With this ninth moon, that sends the hidden sun
 Down yon dark sea, thou comest, darling boy.

II

For in the world, which is not ours, They said
 "Let us make man" and that which should be man,
 From that one light no man can look upon, 10
 Drew to this shore lit by the suns and moons
 And all the shadows. O dear Spirit half-lost
 In thine own shadow and this fleshy sign
 That thou art thou—who wailest being born
 And banish'd into mystery, and the pain
 Of this divisible-indivisible world
 Among the numerable-innumerable
 Sun, sun, and sun, thro' finite-infinite space
 In finite-infinite Time—our mortal veil
 And shatter'd phantom of that infinite One, 20
 Who made thee unconceivably Thyself
 Out of His whole World-self and all in all—
 Live thou! and of the grain and husk, the grape
 And ivyberry, choose; and still depart
 From death to death thro' life and life, and find
 Nearer and ever nearer Him, who wrought
 Not matter, nor the finite-infinite,
 But this main-miracle, that thou art thou,
 With power on thine own act and on the world.

THE ANCIENT SAGE

A thousand summers ere the time of Christ
 From out his ancient city came a Seer
 Whom one that loved, and honour'd him, and yet
 Was no disciple, richly garb'd, but worn
 From wasteful living, follow'd—in his hand
 A scroll of verse—till that old man before 30

A cavern whence an affluent fountain pour'd
From darkness into daylight, turn'd and spoke.

This wealth of waters might but seem to draw
From yon dark cave, but, son, the source is higher,
Yon summit, half-a-league in air—and higher,
The cloud that hides it—higher still, the heavens
Whereby the cloud was moulded, and whereout
The cloud descended. Force is from the heights.

I am wearied of our city, son, and go
To spend my one last year among the hills. 10
What hast thou there? Some deathsong for the
Ghouls

To make their banquet relish? let me read.

“How far thro’ all the bloom and brake
That nightingale is heard!

What power but the bird’s could make
This music in the bird?

How summer-bright are yonder skies,
And earth as fair in hue!

And yet what sign of aught that lies
Behind the green and blue? 20

But man to-day is fancy’s fool
As man hath ever been.

The nameless Power, or Powers, that rule
Were never heard or seen.”

If thou would’st hear the Nameless, and wilt dive
Into the Temple-cave of thine own self,
There, brooding by the central altar, thou
May’st haply learn the Nameless hath a voice,
By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise,
As if thou knewst, tho’ thou canst not know; 30
For Knowledge is the swallow on the lake
That sees and stirs the surface-shadow there
But never yet hath dipt into the Abysm,
The Abysm of all Abysms, beneath, within
The blue sky and sea, the green of earth,
And in the million-millionth of a grain
Which cleft and cleft again for evermore,
And ever vanishing, never vanishes,
To me, my son, more mystic than myself,

Or even than the Nameless is to me.
 And when thou sendest thy free soul thro' heaven,
 Nor understandest bound nor boundlessness,
 Thou seest the Nameless of the hundred names.
 And if the Nameless should withdraw from all
 Thy frailty counts most real, all thy world
 Might vanish like thy shadow in the dark.

"And since—from when this earth began—
 The Nameless never came
 Among us, never spake with man,
 And never named the Name"—

10

Thou canst not prove the Nameless. O my son,
 Nor canst thou prove the world thou movest in,
 Thou canst not prove that thou art body alone,
 Nor canst thou prove that thou art spirit alone,
 Nor canst thou prove that thou are both in one:
 Thou canst not prove thou art immortal, no
 Nor yet that thou art mortal—nay, my son,
 Thou canst not prove that I, who speak with thee,
 Am not thyself in converse with thyself, 20
 For nothing worthy proving can be proven,
 Nor yet disproven: wherefore thou be wise,
 Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
 And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith!
 She reels not in the storm of warring words,
 She brightens at the clash of "Yes" and "No,"
 She sees the Best that glimmers thro' the Worst,
 She feels the Sun is hid but for a night,
 She spies the summer thro' the winter bud,
 She tastes the fruit before the blossom falls, 30
 She hears the lark within the songless egg,
 She finds the fountain where they wail'd "Mirage"!

"What Power? aught akin to Mind,
 The mind in me and you?
 Or power as of the Gods gone blind
 Who see not what they do?"

But some in yonder city hold, my son,
 That none but Gods could build this house of ours,
 So beautiful, vast, various, so beyond

All work of man, yet, like all work of man,
 A beauty with defect—till That which knows,
 And is not known, but felt thro' what we feel
 Within ourselves is highest, shall descend
 On this half-deed, and shape it at the last
 According to the Highest in the Highest.

“What Power but the Years that make
 And break the vase of clay,
 And stir the sleeping earth, and wake
 The bloom that fades away?
 What rulers but the Days and Hours
 That cancel weal with woe,
 And wind the front of youth with flowers,
 And cap our age with snow?”

10

The days and hours are ever glancing by,
 And seem to flicker past thro' sun and shade,
 Or short, or long, as Pleasure leads, or Pain;
 But with the Nameless is nor Day nor Hour;
 Tho' we, thin minds, who creep from thought to
 thought,

Break into “Thens” and “Whens” the Eternal Now: ²⁰
 This double seeming of the single world!—
 My words are like the babblings in a dream
 Of nightmare, when the babblings break the dream.
 But thou be wise in this dream-world of ours,
 Nor take thy dial for thy deity,
 But make the passing shadow serve thy will.

“The years that made the stripling wise
 Undo their work again,
 And leave him, blind of heart and eyes,
 The last and least of men;
 Who clings to earth, and once would dare
 Hell-heat or Arctic cold,
 And now one breath of cooler air
 Would loose him from his hold;
 His winter chills him to the root,
 He withers marrow and mind;
 The kernel of the shrivell'd fruit
 Is jutting thro' the rind;

30

The tiger spasms tear his chest,
 The palsy wags his head;
 The wife, the sons, who love him best
 Would fain that he were dead;
 The griefs by which he once was wrung
 Were never worth the while"—

Who knows? or whether this earth-narrow life
 Be yet but yolk, and forming in the shell?

"The shaft of scorn that once had stung
 But wakes a dotard smile."

10

The placid gleam of sunset after storm!

"The statesman's brain that sway'd the past
 Is feebler than his knees;
 The passive sailor wrecks at last
 In ever-silent seas;
 The warrior hath forgot his arms,
 The Learned all his lore;
 The changing market frets or charms
 The merchant's hope no more;
 The prophet's beacon burn'd in vain,
 And now is lost in cloud;
 The plowman passes, bent with pain,
 To mix with what he plow'd;
 The poet whom his Age would quote
 As heir of endless fame—
 He knows not ev'n the book he wrote,
 Not even his own name.
 For man has overlived his day,
 And, darkening in the light,
 Scarce feels the senses break away
 To mix with ancient Night."

20

30

The shell must break before the bird can fly.

"The years that when my Youth began
 Had set the lily and rose
 By all my ways where'er they ran,
 Have ended mortal foes;

My rose of love for ever gone,
My lily of truth and trust—
They made her lily and rose in one,
And changed her into dust.
O rosetree planted in my grief,
And growing, on her tomb,
Her dust is greening in your leaf,
Her blood is in your bloom.
O slender lily waving there,
And laughing back the light,
In vain you tell me 'Earth is fair'
When all is dark as night."

10

My son, the world is dark with griefs and graves,
So dark that men cry out against the Heavens.
Who knows but that the darkness is in man?
The doors of Night may be the gates of Light;
For wert thou born or blind or deaf, and then
Suddenly heal'd, how would'st thou glory in all
The splendours and the voices of the world!
And we, the poor earth's dying race, and yet
No phantoms, watching from a phantom shore
Await the last and largest sense to make
The phantom walls of this illusion fade,
And show us that the world is wholly fair.

20

"But vain the tears for darken'd years
As laughter over wine,
And vain the laughter as the tears,
O brother, mine or thine,

"For all that laugh, and all that weep,
And all that breathe are one
Slight ripple on the boundless deep
That moves, and all is gone."

30

But that one ripple on the boundless deep
Feels that the deep is boundless, and itself
For ever changing form, but evermore
One with the deep boundless motion of the deep.

“Yet wine and laughter, friends! and set
 The lamps alight, and call
 For golden music, and forget
 The darkness of the pall.”

If utter darkness closed the day, my son—
 But earth's dark forehead flings athwart the heavens
 Her shadow crown'd with stars—and yonder—out
 To northward—some that never set, but pass
 From sight and night to lose themselves in day.
 I hate the black negation of the bier,
 And wish the dead, as happier than ourselves
 And higher, having climb'd one step beyond
 Our village miseries, might be borne in white
 To burial or to burning, hymn'd from hence
 With songs in praise of death, and crown'd with
 flowers!

10

“O worms and maggots of to-day
 Without their hope of wings!”

But louder than thy rhyme the silent word
 Of that world-prophet in the heart of man.

“Tho' some have gleams or so they say
 Of more than mortal things.”

20

To-day? but what of yesterday? for oft
 On me, when boy, there came what then I call'd,
 Who knew no books and no philosophies,
 In my boy-phrase “The Passion of the Past.”
 The first gray streak of earliest summer-dawn,
 The last long stripe of waning crimson gloom,
 As if the late and early were but one—
 A height, a broken grange, a grove, a flower
 Had murmurs “Lost and gone and lost and gone!”³⁰
 A breath, a whisper—some divine farewell—
 Desolate sweetness—far and far away—
 What had he loved, what had he lost, the boy?
 I know not and I speak of what has been.
 And more, my son! for more than once when I
 Sat all alone, revolving in myself

The word that is the symbol of myself,
 The mortal limit of the Self was loosed,
 And past into the Nameless, as a cloud
 Melts into Heaven. I touch'd my limbs, the limbs
 Were strange not mine—and yet no shade of doubt,
 But utter clearness, and thro' loss of Self
 The gain of such large life as match'd with ours
 Were Sun to spark—unshadowable in words,
 Themselves but shadows of a shadow-world.

“And idle gleams will come and go,
 But still the clouds remain;”

10

The clouds themselves are children of the Sun.

“And Night and Shadow rule below
 When only Day should reign.”

And Day and Night are children of the Sun,
 And idle gleams to thee are light to me.
 Some say, the Light was father of the Night,
 And some, the Night was father of the Light,
 No night no day!—I touch thy world again—
 No ill no good! such counter-terms, my son,
 Are border-races, holding, each its own
 By endless war: but night enough is there
 In yon dark city: get thee back: and since
 The key to that weird casket, which for thee
 But holds a skull, is neither thine nor mine,
 But in the hand of what is more than man,
 Or in man's hand when man is more than man,
 Let be thy wail and help thy fellow men,
 And make thy gold thy vassal not thy king,
 And fling free alms into the beggar's bowl,
 And send the day into the darken'd heart;
 Nor list for guerdon in the voice of men,
 A dying echo from a falling wall;
 Nor care—for Hunger hath the Evil eye—
 To vex the noon with fiery gems, or fold
 Thy presence in the silk of sumptuous looms;
 Nor roll thy viands on a luscious tongue,
 Nor drown thyself with flies in honied wine;

20

30

Nor thou be rageful, like a handled bee,
 And lose thy life by usage of thy sting;
 Nor harm an adder thro' the lust for harm,
 Nor make a snail's horn shrink for wantonness;
 And more—think well! Do-well will follow thought,
 And in the fatal sequence of this world
 An evil thought may soil thy children's blood;
 But curb the beast would cast thee in the mire,
 And leave the hot swamp of voluptuousness
 A cloud between the Nameless and thyself,
 And lay thine uphill shoulder to the wheel,
 And climb the Mount of Blessing, whence, if thou
 Look higher, then—perchance—thou mayest—be-
 yond
 A hundred ever-rising mountain lines,
 And past the range of Night and Shadow—see
 The high-heaven dawn of more than mortal day
 Strike on the Mount of Vision!

10

So, farewell.

IDYLLS OF THE KING

IN TWELVE BOOKS

'*Flos Regum Arthurus.*'—JOSEPH OF EXETER

DEDICATION

These to His Memory—since he held them dear,
 Perchance as finding there unconsciously
 Some image of himself—I dedicate,
 I dedicate, I consecrate with tears—
 These Idylls.

20

And indeed He seems to me
 Scarce other than my king's ideal knight,
 "Who revered his conscience as his king;
 Whose glory was redressing human wrong;
 Who spake no slander, no, nor listen'd to it;
 Who loved one only and who clave to her—"
 Her—over all whose realms to their last isle,
 Commingled with the gloom of imminent war,

The shadow of His loss drew like eclipse,
Darkening the world. We have lost him : he is gone :
We know him now : all narrow jealousies
Are silent ; and we see him as he moved,
How modest, kindly, all-accomplish'd, wise,
With what sublime repression of himself,
And in what limits, and how tenderly ;
Not swaying to this faction or to that ;
Not making his high place the lawless perch
Of wing'd ambitions, nor a vantage-ground 10
For pleasure ; but thro' all this tract of years
Wearing the white flower of a blameless life,
Before a thousand peering littlenesses,
In that fierce light which beats upon a throne,
And blackens every blot : for where is he,
Who dares foreshadow for an only son
A lovelier life, a more unstain'd, than his ?
Or how should England dreaming of *his* sons
Hope more for these than some inheritance
Of such a life, a heart, a mind as thine, 20
Thou noble Father of her Kings to be,
Laborious for her people and her poor—
Voice in the rich dawn of an ampler day—
Far-sighted summoner of War and Waste
To fruitful strifes and rivalries of peace—
Sweet nature gilded by the gracious gleam
Of letters, dear to Science, dear to Art,
Dear to thy land and ours, a Prince indeed,
Beyond all titles, and a household name,
Hereafter, thro' all times, Albert the Good. 30

Break not, O woman's-heart, but still endure ;
Break not, for thou art Royal, but endure,
Remembering all the beauty of that star
Which shone so close beside Thee that ye made
One light together, but has past and leaves
The Crown a lonely splendour.

May all love,
His love, unseen but felt, o'ershadow Thee,
The love of all Thy sons encompass Thee,
The love of all Thy daughters cherish Thee,

The love of all Thy people comfort Thee,
Till God's love set Thee at his side again!

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

Leodogran the King of Cameliard,
Had one fair daughter, and none other child;
And she was fairest of all flesh on earth,
Guinevere, and in her his one delight.

For many a petty king ere Arthur came
Ruled in this isle, and ever waging war
Each upon other, wasted all the land;
And still from time to time the heathen host 10
Swarm'd overseas, and harried what was left.
And so there grew great tracts of wilderness,
Wherein the beast was ever more and more,
But man was less and less, till Arthur came.
For first Aurelius lived and fought and died,
And after him King Uther fought and died,
But either fail'd to make the kingdom one.
And after these King Arthur for a space,
And thro' the puissance of his Table Round,
Drew all their petty principdoms under him, 20
Their king and head, and made a realm, and reign'd.

And thus the land of Cameliard was waste,
Thick with wet woods and many a beast therein,
And none or few to scare or chase the beast;
So that wild dog, and wolf and boar and bear
Came night and day, and rooted in the fields,
And wallow'd in the gardens of the King.
And ever and anon the wolf would steal
The children and devour, but now and then,
Her own brood lost or dead, lent her fierce teat 30
To human sucklings; and the children, housed
In her foul den, there at their meat would growl,
And mock their foster-mother on four feet,
Till, straighten'd, they grew up to wolf-like men,
Worse than the wolves. And King Leodogran
Groan'd for the Roman legions here again,
And Cæsar's eagle: then his brother king,

Urien, assail'd him : last a heathen horde,
Reddening the sun with smoke and earth with blood,
And on the spike that split the mother's heart
Spitting the child, brake on him, till, amazed,
He knew not whither he should turn for aid.

But—for he heard of Arthur newly crown'd,
Tho' not without an uproar made by those
Who cried, "He is not Uther's son"—the King
Sent to him, saying, "Arise, and help us thou!
For here between the man and beast we die."

10

And Arthur yet had done no deed of arms,
But heard the call, and came : and Guinevere
Stood by the castle walls to watch him pass ;
But since he neither wore on helm or shield
The golden symbol of his kinglihood,
But rode a simple knight among his knights,
And many of these in richer arms than he,
She saw him not, or mark'd not, if she saw,
One among many, tho' his face was bare.
But Arthur, looking downward as he past,
Felt the light of her eyes into his life
Smite on the sudden, yet rode on, and pitch'd
His tents beside the forest. Then he drave
The heathen ; after, slew the beast, and fell'd
The forest, letting in the sun, and made
Broad pathways for the hunter and the knight
And so return'd.

20

For while he linger'd there,
A doubt that ever smoulder'd in the hearts
Of those great Lords and Barons of his realm
Flash'd forth and into war : for most of these,
Colleguing with a score of petty kings,
Made head against him, crying, "Who is he
That he should rule us ? who hath proven him
King Uther's son ? for lo ! we look at him,
And find nor face nor bearing, limbs nor voice,
Are like to those of Uther whom we knew.
This is the son of Gorlois, not the King ;
This is the son of Anton, not the King."

30

And Arthur, passing thence to battle, felt
 Travail, and throes and agonies of the life,
 Desiring to be join'd with Guinevere;
 And thinking as he rode, "Her father said
 That there between the man and beast they die.
 Shall I not lift her from this land of beasts
 Up to my throne, and side by side with me?
 What happiness to reign a lonely king,
 Vext—O ye stars that shudder over me,
 O earth that soundest hollow under me,
 Vext with waste dream? for saving I be join'd
 To her that is the fairest under heaven,
 I seem as nothing in the mighty world,
 And cannot will my will, nor work my work
 Wholly, nor make myself in mine own realm
 Victor and lord. But were I join'd with her,
 Then might we live together as one life,
 And reigning with one will in everything
 Have power on this dark land to lighten it,
 And power on this dead world to make it live."

10

20

Thereafter—as he speaks who tells the tale—
 When Arthur reach'd a field-of-battle bright
 With pitch'd pavilions of his foe, the world
 Was all so clear about him, that he saw
 The smallest rock far on the faintest hill,
 And even in high day the morning star.
 So when the King had set his banner broad,
 At once from either side, with trumpet-blast,
 And shouts, and clarions shrilling unto blood,
 The long-lanced battle let their horses run.
 And now the Barons and the kings prevail'd,
 And now the King, as here and there that war
 Went swaying; but the Powers who walk the world
 Made lightnings and great thunders over him,
 And dazed all eyes, till Arthur by main might,
 And mightier of his hands with every blow,
 And leading all his knighthood threw the kings
 Carádos, Urien, Cradlemon of Wales,
 Claudius, and Clariance of Northumberland,
 The King Brandagoras of Latangor,
 With Anguisant of Erin, Morgonore,

30

40

And Lot of Orkney. Then, before a voice
As dreadful as the shout of one who sees
To one who sins, and deems himself alone
And all the world asleep, they swerved and brake
Flying, and Arthur call'd to stay the brands
That hack'd among the flyers, "Ho! they yield!"
So like a painted battle the war stood
Silenced, the living quiet as the dead,
And in the heart of Arthur joy was lord.
He laugh'd upon his warrior whom he loved 10
And honour'd most. "Thou dost not doubt me King,
So well thine arm hath wrought for me to-day."
"Sir and my liege," he cried, "the fire of God
Descends upon thee in the battle-field:
I know thee for my King!" Whereat the two,
For each had warded either in the fight,
Sware on the field of death a deathless love.
And Arthur said, "Man's word is God in man:
Let chance what will, I trust thee to the death."

Then quickly from the foughten field he sent 20
Ulfus, and Brastias, and Bedivere,
His new-made knights, to King Leodogran,
Saying, "If I in aught have served thee well,
Give me thy daughter Guinevere to wife."

Whom when he heard, Leodogran in heart
Debating—"How should I that am a king,
However much he help me at my need,
Give my one daughter saving to a king,
And a king's son?"—lifted his voice, and call'd 30
A hoary man, his chamberlain, to whom
He trusted all things, and of him required
His counsel: "Knowest thou aught of Arthur's
birth?"

Then spake the hoary chamberlain and said,
"Sir King, there be but two old men that know:
And each is twice as old as I; and one
Is Merlin, the wise man that ever served
King Uther thro' his magic art; and one
Is Merlin's master (so they call him) Bleys,

Who taught hith magic; but the scholar ran
 Before the master, and so far, that Bleys
 Laid magic by, and sat him down, and wrote
 All things and whatsoever Merlin did
 In one great annual-book, where after-years
 Will learn the secret of our Arthur's birth."

To whom the King Leodogran replied,
 "O friend, had I been holpen half as well
 By this King Arthur as by thee to-day,
 Then beast and man had had their share of me: 10
 But summon here before us yet once more
 Ulfus, and Brastias, and Bedivere."

Then, when they came before him, the King said,
 "I have seen the cuckoo chased by lesser fowl,
 And reason in the chase: but wherefore now
 Do these your lords stir up the heat of war,
 Some calling Arthur born of Gorlois,
 Others of Anton? Tell me, ye yourselves,
 Hold ye this Arthur for King Uther's son?"

And Ulfus and Brastias answer'd, "Ay." 20
 Then Bedivere, the first of all his knights
 Knighted by Arthur at his crowning, spake—
 For bold in heart and act and word was he,
 Whenever slander breathed against the King—

"Sir, there be many rumours on this head:
 For there be those who hate him in their hearts,
 Call him baseborn, and since his ways are sweet,
 And theirs are bestial, hold him less than man:
 And there be those who deem him more than man,
 And dream he dropt from heaven: but my belief 30
 In all this matter—so ye care to learn—
 Sir, for ye know that in King Uther's time
 The prince and warrior Gorlois, he that held
 Tintagil castle by the Cornish sea,
 Was wedded with a winsome wife, Ygerne:
 And daughters had she borne him,—one whereof,
 Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent,
 Hath ever like a loyal sister cleaved

To Arthur,—but a son she had not borne.
And Uther cast upon her eyes of love:
But she, a stainless wife to Gorloïs,
So loathed the bright dishonour of his love,
That Gorloïs and King Uther went to war:
And overthrown was Gorloïs and slain.
Then Uther in his wrath and heat besieged
Ygerne within Tintagil, where her men,
Seeing the mighty swarm about their walls,
Left her and fled, and Uther enter'd in, 10
And there was none to call to but himself.
So, compass'd by the power of the King,
Enforced she was to wed him in her tears,
And with a shameful swiftmess: afterward,
Not many moons, King Uther died himself,
Moaning and wailing for an heir to rule
After him, lest the realm should go to wrack.
And that same night, the night of the new year,
By reason of the bitterness and grief
That vexed his mother, all before his time 20
Was Arthur born, and all as soon as born
Deliver'd at a secret postern-gate
To Merlin, to be holden far apart
Until his hour should come; because the lords
Of that fierce day were as the lords of this,
Wild beasts, and surely would have torn the child
Piecemeal among them, had they known; for each
But sought to rule for his own self and hand,
And many hated Uther for the sake
Of Gorloïs. Wherefore Merlin took the child, 30
And gave him to Sir Anton, an old knight
And ancient friend of Uther; and his wife
Nursed the young prince, and rear'd him with her
own;
And no man knew. And ever since the lords
Have foughten like wild beasts among themselves,
So that the realm has gone to wrack: but now,
This year, when Merlin (for his hour had come)
Brought Arthur forth, and set him in the hall,
Proclaiming, 'Here is Uther's heir, young king,'
A hundred voices cried, 'Away with him! 40
No king of ours! a son of Gorloïs he,

Or else the child of Anton, and no king,
 Or else baseborn.' Yet Merlin thro' his craft,
 And while the people clamour'd for a king,
 Had Arthur crown'd; but after, the great lords
 Banded, and so brake out in open war."

Then while the King debated with himself
 If Arthur were the child of shamefulness,
 Or born the son of Gorlois, after death,
 Or Uther's son, and born before his time,
 Or whether there were truth in anything
 Said by these three, there came to Cameliard,
 With Gawain and young Modred, her two sons,
 Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent;
 Whom as he could, not as he would, the King
 Made feast for, saying, as they sat at meat,

10

"A doubtful throne is ice on summer seas.
 Ye come from Arthur's court. Victor his men
 Report him! Yea, but ye—think ye this king—
 So many those that hate him, and so strong,
 So few his knights, however brave they be—
 Hath body enow to hold his foemen down?"

20

"O King," she cried, "and I will tell thee: few,
 Few, but all brave, all of one mind with him;
 For I was near him when the savage yells
 Of Uther's peerage died, and Arthur sat
 Crown'd on the daïs, and his warriors cried,
 'Be thou the king, and we will work thy will
 Who love thee.' Then the King in low deep tones,
 And simple words of great authority,
 Bound them by so strait vows to his own self,
 That when they rose, knighted from kneeling, some
 Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,
 Some flush'd, and others dazed, as one who wakes
 Half-blinded at the coming of a light.

30

"But when he spake and cheer'd his Table Round
 With large, divine, and comfortable words,
 Beyond my tongue to tell thee—I beheld
 From eye to eye thro' all their Order flash

A momentary likeness of the King:
And ere it left their faces, thro' the cross
And those around it and the Crucified,
Down from the casement over Arthur, smote
Flame-colour, vert and azure, in three rays,
One falling upon each of three fair queens,
Who stood in silence near his throne, the friends
Of Arthur, gazing on him, tall, with bright
Sweet faces, who will help him at his need.

“And there I saw mage Merlin, whose vast wit 10
And hundred winters are but as the hands
Of loyal vassals toiling for their liege.

“And near him stood the Lady of the Lake,
Who knows a subtler magic than his own—
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful.
She gave the King his huge cross-hilted sword,
Whereby to drive the heathen out: a mist
Of incense curl'd about her, and her face
Wellnigh was hidden in the minster gloom;
But there was heard among the holy hymns 20
A voice as of the waters, for she dwells
Down in a deep; calm, whatsoever storms
May shake the world, and when the surface rolls,
Hath power to walk the waters like our Lord.

“There likewise I beheld Excalibur
Before him at his crowning borne, the sword
That rose from out the bosom of the lake,
And Arthur row'd across and took it—rich
With jewels, elfin Urim, on the hilt,
Bewildering heart and eye—the blade so bright 30
That men are blinded by it—on one side,
Graven in the oldest tongue of all this world,
‘Take me,’ but turn the blade and ye shall see,
And written in the speech ye speak yourself,
‘Cast me away!’ And sad was Arthur's face
Taking it, but old Merlin counsell'd him,
‘Take thou and strike! the time to cast away
Is yet far-off.’ So this great brand the king
Took, and by this will beat his foemen down.”

Thereat Leodogran rejoiced, but thought
To sift his doubtings to the last, and ask'd,
Fixing full eyes of question on her face,
"The swallow and the swift are near akin,
But thou art closer to this noble prince,
Being his own dear sister;" and she said,
"Daughter of Gorloïs and Ygerne am I;"
"And therefore Arthur's sister?" ask'd the King.
She answer'd, "These be secret things," and sign'd
To those two sons to pass, and let them be. 10
And Gawain went, and breaking into song
Sprang out, and follow'd by his flying hair
Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw:
But Modred laid his ear beside the doors,
And there half-heard; the same that afterward
Struck for the throne, and striking found his doom.

And then the Queen made answer, "What know I?
For dark my mother was in eyes and hair,
And dark in hair and eyes am I; and dark
Was Gorloïs, yea and dark was Uther too, 20
Wellnigh to blackness; but this King is fair
Beyond the race of Britons and of men.
Moreover, always in my mind I hear
A cry from out the dawning of my life,
A mother weeping, and I hear her say,
'O that ye had some brother, pretty one,
To guard thee on the rough ways of the world.'"

"Ay," said the King, "and hear ye such a cry?
But when did Arthur chance upon thee first?"

"O King!" she cried, "and I will tell thee true: 30
He found me first when yet a little maid:
Beaten had I been for a little fault
Whereof I was not guilty; and out I ran
And flung myself down on a bank of heath,
And hated this fair world and all therein,
And wept, and wish'd that I were dead; and he—
I know not whether of himself he came,
Or brought by Merlin, who, they say, can walk
Unseen at pleasure—he was at my side,

And spake sweet words, and comforted my heart,
And dried my tears, being a child with me.
And many a time he came, and evermore
As I grew greater grew with me; and sad
At times he seem'd, and sad with him was I,
Stern too at times, and then I loved him not,
But sweet again, and then I loved him well.
And now of late I see him less and less,
But those first days had golden hours for me,
For then I surely thought he would be king.

10

“But let me tell thee now another tale:
For Bleys, our Merlin's master, as they say,
Died but of late, and sent his cry to me,
To hear him speak before he left his life.
Shrunk like a fairy changeling lay the mage;
And when I enter'd told me that himself
And Merlin ever served about the King,
Uther, before he died; and on the night
When Uther in Tintagil past away
Moaning and wailing for an heir, the two
Left the still King, and passing forth to breathe,
Then from the castle gateway by the chasm
Descending thro' the dismal night—a night
In which the bounds of heaven and earth were lost—
Beheld, so high upon the dreary deeps
It seem'd in heaven, a ship, the shape thereof
A dragon wing'd, and all from stem to stern
Bright with a shining people on the decks,
And gone as soon as seen. And then the two
Dropt to the cove, and watch'd the great sea fall,
Wave after wave, each mightier than the last,
Till last, a ninth one, gathering half the deep
And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged
Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame:
And down the wave and in the flame was borne
A naked babe, and rode to Merlin's feet,
Who stoopt and caught the babe, and cried ‘The
King!

20

30

Here is an heir for Uther!’ And the fringe
Of that great breaker, sweeping up the strand,
Lash'd at the wizard as he spake the word,

40

And all at once all round him rose in fire,
 So that the child and he were clothed in fire.
 And presently thereafter follow'd calm,
 Free sky and stars: 'And this same child,' he said,
 'Is he who reigns; nor could I part in peace
 Till this were told.' And saying this the seer
 Went thro' the strait and dreadful pass of death,
 Not ever to be question'd any more
 Save on the further side; but when I met
 Merlin, and ask'd him if these things were truth— 10
 The shining dragon and the naked child
 Descending in the glory of the seas—
 He laugh'd as is his wont, and answer'd me
 In riddling triplets of old time, and said:

"'Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow in the sky!
 A young man will be wiser by and by;
 An old man's wit may wander ere he die.

Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow on the lea!
 And truth is this to me, and that to thee;
 And truth or clothed or naked let it be. 20

Rain, sun, and rain! and the free blossom blows:
 Sun, rain, and sun! and where is he who knows?
 From the great deep to the great deep he goes.'

"So Merlin riddling anger'd me; but thou
 Fear not to give this King thine only child,
 Guinevere: so great bards of him will sing
 Hereafter; and dark sayings from of old
 Ranging and ringing thro' the minds of men,
 And echo'd by old folk beside their fires
 For comfort after their wage-work is done, 30
 Speak of the King; and Merlin in our time
 Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn
 Tho' men may wound him that he will not die,
 But pass, again to come; and then or now
 Utterly smite the heathen underfoot,
 Till these and all men hail him for their king."

She spake and King Leodogran rejoiced,
 But musing "Shall I answer yea or nay?"
 Doubted, and drowsed, nodded and slept, and saw,

Dreaming, a slope of land that ever grew,
Field after field, up to a height, the peak
Haze-hidden, and thereon a phantom king.
Now looming, and now lost; and on the slope
The sword rose, the hind fell, the herd was driven,
Fire glimpsed; and all the land from roof and rick,
In drifts of smoke before a rolling wind,
Stream'd to the peak, and mingled with the haze
And made it thicker; while the phantom king
Sent out at times a voice; and here or there 10
Stood one who pointed toward the voice, the rest
Slew on and burnt, crying, "No king of ours,
No son of Uther, and no king of ours;"
Till with a wink his dream was changed, the haze
Descended, and the solid earth became
As nothing, but the King stood out in heaven,
Crown'd. And Leodogran awoke, and sent
Ulfius, and Brastias and Bedivere,
Back to the court of Arthur answering yea.

Then Arthur charged his warrior whom he loved 20
And honour'd most, Sir Lancelot, to ride forth
And bring the Queen;—and watch'd him from the
gates:

And Lancelot past away among the flowers,
(For then was latter April) and return'd
Among the flowers, in May, with Guinevere.
To whom arrived, by Dubric the high saint,
Chief of the church in Britain, and before
The stateliest of her altar-shrines, the King
That morn was married, while in stainless white,
The fair beginners of a nobler time, 30
And glorying in their vows and him, his knights
Stood round him, and rejoicing in his joy.
Far shone the fields of May thro' open door,
The sacred altar blossom'd white with May,
The Sun of May descended on their King,
They gazed on all earth's beauty in their Queen,
Roll'd incense, and there past along the hymns
A voice as of the waters, while the two
Swore at the shrine of Christ a deathless love:
And Arthur said, "Behold, thy doom is mine. 40

Let chance what will, I love thee to the death!"
To whom the Queen replied with drooping eyes,
"King and my lord, I love thee to the death!"
And holy Dubric spread his hands and spake,
"Reign ye, and live and love, and make the world
Other, and may thy Queen be one with thee,
And all this Order of thy Table Round
Fulfil the boundless purpose of their King!"

So Dubric said; but when they left the shrine
Great Lords from Rome before the portal stood, 10
In scornful stillness gazing as they past;
Then while they paced a city all on fire
With sun and cloth of gold, the trumpets blew,
And Arthur's knighthood sang before the King:—

"Blow trumpet, for the world is white with May;
Blow trumpet, the long night hath roll'd away!
Blow thro' the living world—'Let the King reign.'

"Shall Rome or Heathen rule in Arthur's realm?
Flash brand and lance, fall battleaxe upon helm,
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign. 20

"Strike for the King and live! his knights have
heard
That God hath told the King a secret word.
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.

"Blow trumpet! he will lift us from the dust.
Blow trumpet! live the strength and die the lust!
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King
reign.

"Strike for the King and die! and if thou diest,
The King is King, and ever wills the highest.
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King
reign.

"Blow, for our Sun is mighty in his May!
Blow, for our Sun is mightier day by day!
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King
reign.

"The King will follow Christ, and we the King
In whom high God hath breathed a secret thing.
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King
reign."

So sang the knighthood, moving to their hall.
There at the banquet those great Lords from Rome,
The slowly-fading mistress of the world,
Strode in, and claim'd their tribute as of yore.
But Arthur spake, "Behold, for these have sworn
To wage my wars, and worship me their King;
The old order changeth, yielding place to new; 10
And we that fight for our fair father Christ,
Seeing that ye be grown too weak and old
To drive the heathen from your Roman wall,
No tribute will we pay:" so those great lords
Drew back in wrath, and Arthur strove with Rome.

And Arthur and his knighthood for a space
Were all one will, and thro' that strength the King
Drew in the petty principedoms under him,
Fought, and in twelve great battles overcame
The heathen hordes, and made a realm and reign'd. 20

THE ROUND TABLE

GARETH AND LYNETTE

The last tall son of Lot and Bellicent,
And tallest, Gareth, in a showerful spring
Stared at the spate. A slender-shafted Pine
Lost footing, fell, and so was whirl'd away.
"How he went down," said Gareth, "as a false
knight

Or evil king before my lance if lance
Were mine to use—O senseless cataract,
Bearing all down in thy precipitancy—
And yet thou art but swollen with cold snows
And mine is living blood: thou dost His will, 30
The Maker's, and not knowest, and I that know,
Have strength and wit, in my good mother's hall
Linger with vacillating obedience,

Prison'd, and kept and coax'd and whistled to—
Since the good mother holds me still a child!
Good mother is bad mother unto me!

A worse were better; yet no worse would I.
Heaven yield her for it, but in me put force
To weary her ears with one continuous prayer,
Until she let me fly discaged to sweep
In ever-highering eagle-circles up
To the great Sun of Glory, and thence swoop
Down upon all things base, and dash them dead, 10
A knight of Arthur, working out his will,
To cleanse the world. Why, Gawain, when he came
With Modred hither in the summertime,
Ask'd me to tilt with him, the proven knight.
Modred for want of worthier was the judge.
Then I so shook him in the saddle, he said,
'Thou hast half prevail'd against me,' said so—he—
Tho' Modred biting his thin lips was mute,
For he is alway sullen: what care I?"

And Gareth went, and hovering round her chair 20
Ask'd, "Mother, tho' ye count me still the child,
Sweet mother, do ye love the child?" She laugh'd,
"Thou art but a wild-goose to question it."
"Then, mother, an ye love the child," he said,
"Being a goose and rather tame than wild,
Hear the child's story." "Yea, my well-beloved,
An 'twere but of the goose and golden eggs."

And Gareth answer'd her with kindling eyes,
"Nay, nay, good mother, but this egg of mine
Was finer gold than any goose can lay; 30
For this an Eagle, a royal Eagle, laid
Almost beyond eye-reach, on such a palm
As glitters gilded in thy Book of Hours.
And there was ever haunting round the palm
A lusty youth, but poor, who often saw
The splendour sparkling from aloft, and thought
'An I could climb and lay my hand upon it,
Then were I wealthier than a leash of kings.'
But ever when he reach'd a hand to climb,
One, that had loved him from his childhood, caught 40

And stay'd him, 'Climb not lest thou break thy neck,
I charge thee by my love,' and so the boy,
Sweet mother, neither clomb, nor brake his neck,
But brake his very heart in pining for it,
And past away."

To whom the mother said,
"True love, sweet son, had risk'd himself and
climb'd,
And handed down the golden treasure to him."

And Gareth answer'd her with kindling eyes,
"Gold? said I gold?—ay then, why he, or she,
Or whosoe'er it was, or half the world
Had ventured—*had* the thing I spake of been
Mere gold—but this was all of that true steel,
Whereof they forged the brand Excalibur,
And lightnings play'd about it in the storm,
And all the little fowl were flurried at it,
And there were cries and clashings in the nest,
That sent him from his senses: let me go."

10

Then Bellicent bemoan'd herself and said,
"Hast thou no pity upon my loneliness?
Lo, where thy father Lot beside the hearth
Lies like a log, and all but smoulder'd out!
For ever since when traitor to the King
He fought against him in the Barons' war,
And Arthur gave him back his territory,
His age hath slowly droopt, and now lies there
A yet-warm corpse, and yet unburiable,
No more; nor sees, nor hears, nor speaks, nor
knows.

20

And both thy brethren are in Arthur's hall,
Albeit neither loved with that full love
I feel for thee, nor worthy such a love:
Stay therefore thou; red berries charm the bird,
And thee, mine innocent, the jousts, the wars,
Who never knewest finger-ache, nor pang
Of wrench'd or broken limb—an often chance
In those brain-stunning shocks, and tourney-falls,
Frights to my heart; but stay: follow the deer

30

By these tall firs and our fast-falling burns;
 So make thy manhood mightier day by day;
 Sweet is the chase: and I will seek thee out
 Some comfortable bride and fair, to grace
 Thy climbing life, and cherish my prone year,
 Till falling into Lot's forgetfulness
 I know not thee, myself, nor anything.
 Stay, my best son! ye are yet more boy than man."

Then Gareth, "An ye hold me yet for child,
 Hear yet once more the story of the child. 10
 For, mother, there was once a King, like ours.
 The prince his heir, when tall and marriageable,
 Ask'd for a bride; and thereupon the King
 Set two before him. One was fair, strong, arm'd—
 But to be won by force—and many men
 Desired her; one, good lack, no man desired.
 And these were the conditions of the King:
 That save he won the first by force, he needs
 Must wed that other, whom no man desired,
 A red-faced bride who knew herself so vile, 20
 That evermore she long'd to hide herself,
 Nor fronted man or woman, eye to eye—
 Yea—some she cleaved to, but they died of her.
 And one—they call'd her Fame; and one,—O
 Mother,
 How can ye keep me tether'd to you—Shame.
 Man am I grown, a man's work must I do.
 Follow the deer? follow the Christ, the King,
 Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the
 King—
 Else, wherefore born?"

To whom the mother said,
 "Sweet son, for there be many who deem him not, 30
 Or will not deem him, wholly proven King—
 Albeit in mine own heart I knew him King,
 When I was frequent with him in my youth,
 And heard him Kingly speak, and doubted him
 No more than he, himself; but felt him mine,
 Of closest kin to me: yet—wilt thou leave
 Thine easeful biding here, and risk thine all,

Life, limbs, for one that is not proven King?
Stay, till the cloud that settles round his birth
Hath lifted but a little. Stay, sweet son."

And Gareth answer'd quickly, "Not an hour,
So that ye yield me—I will walk thro' fire,
Mother, to gain it—your full leave to go.
Not proven, who swept the dust of ruin'd Rome
From off the threshold of the realm, and crush'd
The Idolators, and made the people free?
Who should be King save him who makes us free?" 10

So when the Queen, who long had sought in vain
To break him from the intent to which he grew,
Found her son's will unwaveringly one,
She answer'd craftily, "Will ye walk thro' fire?
Who walks thro' fire will hardly heed the smoke.
Ay, go then, an ye must: only one proof.
Before thou ask the King to make thee knight,
Of thine obedience and thy love to me,
Thy mother,—I demand."

And Gareth cried, 20
"A hard one, or a hundred, so I go.
Nay—quick! the proof to prove me to the quick!"

But slowly spake the mother looking at him,
"Prince, thou shalt go disguised to Arthur's hall,
And hire thyself to serve for meats and drinks
Among the scullions and the kitchen-knaves,
And those that hand the dish across the bar.
Nor shalt thou tell thy name to anyone.
And thou shalt serve a twelvemonth and a day."

For so the Queen believed that when her son 30
Beheld his only way to glory lead
Low down thro' villain kitchen-vassalage,
Her own true Gareth was too princely-proud
To pass thereby; so should he rest with her,
Closed in her castle from the sound of arms.

Silent awhile was Gareth, then replied,
"The thrall in person may be free in soul,

And I shall see the jousts. Thy son am I,
And since thou art my mother, must obey.
I therefore yield me freely to thy will;
For hence will I, disguised, and hire myself
To serve with scullions and with kitchen-knaves;
Nor tell my name to any—no, not the King.”

Gareth awhile linger'd. The mother's eye
Full of the wistful fear that he would go,
And turning toward him whereso'er he turn'd,
Perplext his outward purpose, till an hour,
When waken'd by the wind which with full voice
Swept bellowing thro' the darkness on to dawn,
He rose, and out of slumber calling two
That still had tended on him from his birth,
Before the wakeful mother heard him, went.

The three were clad like tillers of the soil.
Southward they set their faces. The birds made
Melody on branch, and melody in mid air.
The damp hill-slopes were quicken'd into green,
And the live green had kindled into flowers,
For it was past the time of Easterday.

So, when their feet were planted on the plain
That broaden'd toward the base of Camelot,
Far off they saw the silver-misty morn'
Rolling her smoke about the Royal mount,
That rose between the forest and the field.
At times the summit of the high city flash'd;
At times the spires and turrets half-way down
Prick'd thro' the mist; at times the great gate shone
Only, that open'd on the field below:
Anon, the whole fair city had disappear'd.

Then those who went with Gareth were amazed,
One crying, “Let us go no further, lord.
Here is a city of Enchanters, built
By fairy Kings.” The second echo'd him,
“Lord, we have heard from our wise man at home
To Northward, that this King is not the King,
But only changeling out of Fairyland,

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Who drave the heathen hence by sorcery
And Merlin's glamour." Then the first again,
"Lord, there is no such city anywhere,
But all a vision."

Gareth answer'd them

With laughter, swearing he had glamour enow
In his own blood, his pryncedom, youth and hopes,
To plunge old Merlin in the Arabian sea;
So push'd them all unwilling toward the gate.
And there was no gate like it under heaven.
For barefoot on the keystone, which was lined 10
And rippled like an ever-fleeting wave,
The Lady of the Lake stood: all her dress
Wept from her sides as water flowing away;
But like the cross her great and goodly arms
Stretch'd under all the cornice and upheld:
And drops of water fell from either hand;
And down from one a sword was hung, from one
A censer, either worn with wind and storm;
And o'er her breast floated the sacred fish; 20
And in the space to left of her, and right,
Were Arthur's wars in weird devices done,
New things and old co-twisted, as if Time
Were nothing, so inveterately, that men
Were giddy gazing there; and over all
High on the top were those three Queens, the friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his need.

Then those with Gareth for so long a space
Stared at the figures, that at last it seem'd
The dragon-boughts and elvish enblenings
Began to move, seethe, twine and curl: they call'd 30
To Gareth, "Lord, the gateway is alive."

And Gareth likewise on them fixt his eyes
So long, that ev'n to him they seem'd to move.
Out of the city a blast of music peal'd.
Back from the gate started the three, to whom
From out thereunder came an ancient man,
Long-bearded, saying, "Who be ye, my sons?"

Then Gareth, "We be tillers of the soil,
Who leaving share in furrow come to see
The glories of our King: but these, my men,
(Your city moved so weirdly in the mist)
Doubt if the King be King at all, or come
From Fairyland; and whether this be built
By magic, and by fairy Kings and Queens;
Or whether there be any city at all,
Or all a vision: and this music now
Hath scared them both, but tell thou these the truth." 10

Then that old Seer made answer playing on him
And saying, "Son, I have seen the good ship sail
Keel upward, and mast downward, in the heavens,
And solid turrets topsy-turvy in air:
And here is truth; but an it please thee not,
Take thou the truth as thou hast told it me.
For truly as thou sayest, a Fairy King
And Fairy Queens have built the city, son;
They came from out a sacred mountain-cleft
Toward the sunrise, each with harp in hand, 20
And built it to the music of their harps.
And, as thou sayest, it is enchanted, son,
For there is nothing in it as it seems
Saving the King; tho' some there be that hold
The King a shadow, and the city real:
Yet take thou heed of him, for, so thou pass
Beneath this archway, then wilt thou become
A thrall to his enchantments, for the King
Will bind thee by such vows, as is a shame
A man should not be bound by, yet the which 30
No man can keep; but, so thou dread to swear,
Pass not beneath this gateway, but abide
Without, among the cattle of the field.
For an ye heard a music, like enow
They are building still, seeing the city is built
To music, therefore never built at all,
And therefore built for ever."

Gareth spake
Anger'd, "Old Master, reverence thine own beard
That looks as white as utter truth, and seems

Wellnigh as long as thou art statued tall!
 Why mockest thou the stranger that hath been
 To thee fair-spoken?"

But the Seer replied,
 "Know ye not then the Riddling of the Bards?
 'Confusion and illusion, and relation,
 Elusion, and occasion, and evasion'?
 I mock thee not but as thou mockest me,
 And all that see thee, for thou art not who
 Thou seemest, but I know thee who thou art.
 And now thou goest up to mock the King,
 Who cannot brook the shadow of any lie."

10

Unmockingly the mocker ending here
 Turn'd to the right, and past along the plain;
 Whom Gareth looking after said, "My men,
 Our one white lie sits like a little ghost
 Here on the threshold of our enterprise.
 Let love be blamed for it, not she, nor I:
 Well, we will make amends."

With all good cheer
 He spake and laugh'd, then enter'd with his twain
 Camelot, a city of shadowy palaces
 And stately, rich in emblem and the work
 Of ancient kings who did their days in stone;
 Which Merlin's hand, the Mage at Arthur's court,
 Knowing all arts, had touch'd, and everywhere
 At Arthur's ordinance, tipt with lessening peak
 And pinnacle, and had made it spire to heaven.
 And ever and anon a knight would pass
 Outward, or inward to the hall: his arms
 Clash'd; and the sound was good to Gareth's ear.
 And out of bower and casement shyly glanced
 Eyes of pure women, wholesome stars of love;
 And all about a healthful people stept
 As in the presence of a gracious king.

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Then into hall Gareth ascending heard
 A voice, the voice of Arthur, and beheld
 Far over heads in that long-vaulted hall

The splendour of the presence of the King
Throned, and delivering doom—and look'd no
more—

But felt his young heart hammering in his ears,
And thought, "For this half-shadow of a lie
The truthful King will doom me when I speak."
Yet pressing on, tho' all in fear to find
Sir Gawain or Sir Modred, saw nor one
Nor other, but in all the listening eyes
Of those tall knights, that ranged about the throne,
Clear honour shining like the dewy star 10
Of dawn, and faith in their great King, with pure
Affection, and the light of victory,
And glory gain'd, and evermore to gain.

Then came a widow crying to the King,
"A boon, Sir King! Thy father, Uther, reft
From my dead lord a field with violence:
For howsoe'er at first he proffer'd gold,
Yet, for the field was pleasant in our eyes,
We yielded not; and then he reft us of it
Perforce, and left us neither gold nor field." 20

Said Arthur, "Whether would ye? gold or field?"
To whom the woman weeping, "Nay, my lord,
The field was pleasant in my husband's eye."

And Arthur, "Have thy pleasant field again,
And thrice the gold for Uther's use thereof,
According to the years. No boon is here,
But justice, so thy say be proven true.
Accursed, who from the wrongs his father did
Would shape himself a right!"

And while she past,
Came yet another widow crying to him, 30
"A boon, Sir King! Thine enemy, King, am I.
With thine own hand thou slewest my dear lord,
A knight of Uther in the Barons' war,
When Lot and many another rose and fought
Against thee, saying thou wert basely born.
I held with these, and loathe to ask thee aught.

Yet lo! my husband's brother had my son
Thrall'd in his castle, and hath starved him dead;
And standeth seized of that inheritance
Which thou that slewest the sire hast left the son.
So tho' I scarce can ask it thee for hate,
Grant me some knight to do the battle for me,
Kill the foul thief, and wreak me for my son."

Then strode a good knight forward, crying to him,
"A boon, Sir King! I am her kinsman, I.
Give me to right her wrong, and slay the man."

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Then came Sir Kay, the seneschal, and cried,
"A boon, Sir King! ev'n that thou grant her none,
This railer, that hath mock'd thee in full hall—
None; or the wholesome boon of gyve and gag."

But Arthur, "We sit King, to help the wrong'd
Thro' all our realm. The woman loves her lord.
Peace to thee, woman, with thy loves and hates!
The kings of old had doom'd thee to the flames,
Aurelius Emrys would have scourged thee dead,
And Uther slit thy tongue: but get thee hence—
Lest that rough humour of the kings of old
Return upon me! Thou that art her kin,
Go likewise; lay him low and slay him not,
But bring him here, that I may judge the right,
According to the justice of the King:
Then, be he guilty, by that deathless King
Who lived and died for men, the man shall die."

20

Then came in hall the messenger of Mark,
A name of evil savour in the land,
The Cornish king. In either hand he bore
What dazzled all, and shone far-off as shines
A field of charlock in the sudden sun
Between two showers, a cloth of palest gold,
Which down he laid before the throne, and knelt,
Delivering, that his lord, the vassal king,
Was ev'n upon his way to Camelot;
For having heard that Arthur of his grace
Had made his goodly cousin, Tristram, knight,

30

And, for himself was of the greater state,
Being a king, he trusted his liege-lord
Would yield him this large honour all the more;
So pray'd him well to accept this cloth of gold,
In token of true heart and feälty.

Then Arthur cried to rend the cloth, to rend
In pieces, and so cast it on the hearth.
An oak-tree smoulder'd there. "The goodly knight!
What! shall the shield of Mark stand among these?"
For, midway down the side of that long hall 10
A stately pile,—whereof along the front,
Some blazon'd, some but carven, and some blank,
There ran a treble range of stony shields,—
Rose, and high-arching overbrow'd the hearth.
And under every shield a knight was named:
For this was Arthur's custom in his hall;
When some good knight had done one noble deed,
His arms were carven only; but if twain
His arms were blazon'd also; but if none, 20
The shield was blank and bare without a sign
Saving the name beneath; and Gareth saw
The shield of Gawain blazon'd rich and bright,
And Modred's blank as death; and Arthur cried
To rend the cloth and cast it on the hearth.

"More like are we to reave him of his crown
Than make him knight because men call him king.
The kings we found, ye know we stay'd their hands
From war among themselves, but left them kings;
Of whom were any bounteous, merciful,
Truth-speaking, brave, good livers, them we enroll'd 30
Among us, and they sit within our hall.
But Mark hath tarnish'd the great name of king,
As Mark would sully the low state of churl:
And, seeing he hath sent us cloth of gold,
Return, and meet, and hold him from our eyes,
Lest we should lap him up in cloth of lead,
Silenced for ever—craven—a man of plots,
Craft, poisonous counsels, wayside ambushings—
No fault of thine: let Kay the seneschal

Look to thy wants, and send thee satisfied—
Accursed, who strikes nor lets the hand be seen!"

And many another suppliant crying came
With noise of ravage wrought by beast and man,
And evermore a knight would ride away.

Last, Gareth leaning both hands heavily
Down on the shoulders of the twain, his men,
Approach'd between them toward the King, and
ask'd,

"A boon, Sir King (his voice was all ashamed),
For see ye not how weak and hungerworn 10
I seem—leaning on these? grant me to serve
For meat and drink among thy kitchen-knaves
A twelvemonth and a day, nor seek my name.
Hereafter I will fight."

To him the King,
"A goodly youth and worth a goodlier boon!
But so thou wilt no goodlier, then must Kay,
The master of the meats and drinks, be thine."

He rose and past; then Kay, a man of mien
Wan-sallow as the plant that feels itself
Root-bitten by white lichen,

"Lo ye now! 20
This fellow hath broken from some Abbey, where,
God wot, he had not beef and brewis enow,
However that might chance! but an he work,
Like any pigeon will I cram his crop,
And sleeker shall he shine than any hog."

Then Lancelot standing near, "Sir Seneschal,
Sleuth-hound thou knowest, and gray, and all the
hounds;

A horse thou knowest, a man thou dost not know:
Broad brows and fair, a fluent hair and fine,
High nose, a nostril large and fine, and hands 30
Large, fair and fine!—Some young lad's mystery—
But, or from sheepcot or king's hall, the boy

Is noble-natured. Treat him with all grace,
Lest he should come to shame thy judging of him."

Then Kay, "What murmurest thou of mystery?
Think ye this fellow will poison the King's dish?
Nay, for he spake too fool-like: mystery!
Tut, an the lad were noble, he had ask'd
For horse and armour: fair and fine, forsooth!
Sir Fine-face, Sir Fair-hands? but see thou to it
That thine own fineness, Lancelot, some fine day
Undo thee not—and leave my man to me."

10

So Gareth all for glory underwent
The sooty yoke of kitchen-vassalage;
Ate with young lads his portion by the door,
And couch'd at night with grimy kitchen-knaves.
And Lancelot ever spake him pleasantly.
But Kay the seneschal, who loved him not,
Would hustle and harry him, and labour him
Beyond his comrade of the hearth, and set
To turn the broach, draw water, or hew wood,
Or grosser tasks; and Gareth bow'd himself
With all obedience to the King, and wrought
All kind of service with a noble ease
That graced the lowliest act in doing it.
And when the thralls had talk among themselves,
And one would praise the love that linkt the King
And Lancelot—how the King had saved his life
In battle twice, and Lancelot once the King's—
For Lancelot was the first in Tournament,
But Arthur mightiest on the battle-field—
Gareth was glad. Or if some other told,
How once the wandering forester at dawn,
Far over the blue tarns and hazy seas,
On Caer-Eryri's highest found the King,
A naked babe, of whom the Prophet spake,
"He passes to the Isle of Avilion,
He passes and is heal'd and cannot die"—
Gareth was glad. But if their talk were foul,
Then would he whistle rapid as any lark,
Or carol some old roundelay, and so loud
That first they mock'd, but, after, revered him.

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Or Gareth telling some prodigious tale
Of knights, who sliced a red life-bubbling way
Thro' twenty folds of twisted dragon, held
All in a gap-mouth'd circle his good mates
Lying or sitting round him, idle hands,
Charm'd; till Sir Kay, the seneschal, would come
Blustering upon them, like a sudden wind
Among dead leaves, and drive them all apart.
Or when the thralls had sport among themselves,
So there were any trial of mastery, 10
He, by two yards in casting bar or stone
Was counted best; and if there chanced a joust,
So that Sir Kay nodded him leave to go,
Would hurry thither, and when he saw the knights
Clash like the coming and retiring wave,
And the spear spring, and good horse reel, the boy
Was half beyond himself for ecstasy.

So for a month he wrought among the thralls;
But in the weeks that follow'd, the good Queen,
Repentant of the word she made him swear, 20
And saddening in her childless castle, sent,
Between the in-crescent and de-crescent moon,
Arms for her son, and loosed him from his vow.

This, Gareth hearing from a squire of Lot
With whom he used to play at tourney once,
When both were children, and in lonely haunts
Would scratch a ragged oval on the sand,
And each at either dash from either end—
Shame never made girl redder than Gareth joy.
He laugh'd; he sprang. "Out of the smoke, at once 30
I leap from Satan's foot to Peter's knee—
These news be mine, none other's—nay, the King's—
Descend into the city:" whereon he sought
The King alone, and found, and told him all.

"I have stagger'd thy strong Gawain in a tilt
For pastime; yea, he said it: joust can I.
Make me thy knight—in secret! let my name
Be hidd'n, and give me the first quest, I spring
Like flame from ashes."

Here the King's calm eye
 Fell on, and check'd, and made him flush, and bow
 Lowly, to kiss his hand, who answer'd him,
 "Son, the good mother let me know thee here,
 And sent her wish that I would yield thee thine.
 Make thee my knight? my knights are sworn to vows
 Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness,
 And, loving, utter faithfulness in love,
 And uttermost obedience to the King."

Then Gareth, lightly springing from his knees, 10
 "My King, for hardihood I can promise thee.
 For uttermost obedience make demand
 Of whom ye gave me to, the Seneschal,
 No mellow master of the meats and drinks!
 And as for love, God wot, I love not yet,
 But love I shall, God willing."

And the King—
 "Make thee my knight in secret? yea, but he,
 Our noblest brother, and our truest man,
 And one with me in all, he needs must know."

"Let Lancelot know, my King, let Lancelot know, 20
 Thy noblest and thy truest!"

And the King—
 "But wherefore would ye men should wonder at
 you?
 Nay, rather for the sake of me, their King,
 And the deed's sake my knighthood do the deed,
 Than to be noised of."

Merrily Gareth ask'd,
 "Have I not earn'd my cake in baking of it?
 Let be my name until I make my name!
 My deeds will speak: it is but for a day."
 So with a kindly hand on Gareth's arm
 Smiled the great King, and half-unwillingly 30
 Loving his lusty youthhood yielded to him.
 Then, after summoning Lancelot privily,
 "I have given him the first quest: he is not proven.

Look therefore when he calls for this in hall,
Thou get to horse and follow him far away.
Cover the lions on thy shield, and see
Far as thou mayest, he be nor ta'en nor slain."

Then that same day there past into the hall
A damsel of high lineage, and a brow
May-blossom, and a cheek of apple-blossom,
Hawk-eyes; and lightly was her slender nose
Tip-tilted like the petal of a flower;
She into hall past with her page and cried,

10

"O King, for thou hast driven the foe without,
See to the foe within! bridge, ford, beset
By bandits, everyone that owns a tower
The Lord for half a league. Why sit ye there?
Rest would I not, Sir King, an I were king,
Till ev'n the lonest hold were all as free
From cursed bloodshed, as thine altarcloth
From that best blood it is a sin to spill."

"Comfort thyself," said Arthur, "I nor mine
Rest: so my knighthood keep the vows they swore, 20
The wastest moorland of our realm shall be
Safe, damsel, as the centre of this hall.
What is thy name? thy need?"

"My name?" she said—
"Lynette my name; noble; my need, a knight
To combat for my sister, Lyonors,
A lady of high lineage, of great lands,
And comely, yea, and comelier than myself.
She lives in Castle Perilous: a river
Runs in three loops about her living-place;
And o'er it are three passings, and three knights 30
Defend the passings, brethren, and a fourth
And of that four the mightiest, holds her stay'd
In her own castle, and so besieges her
To break her will, and make her wed with him:
And but delays his purport till thou send
To do the battle with him, thy chief man
Sir Lancelot whom he trusts to overthrow,

Then wed, with glory: but she will not wed
 Save whom she loveth, or a holy life.
 Now therefore have I come for Lancelot."

Then Arthur mindful of Sir Gareth ask'd,
 "Damsel, ye know this Order lives to crush
 All wrongers of the Realm. But say, these four,
 Who be they? What the fashion of the men?"

"They be of foolish fashion, O Sir King,
 The fashion of that old knight-errantry
 Who ride abroad, and do but what they will;
 Courteous or bestial from the moment, such
 As have nor law nor king; and three of these
 Proud in their fantasy call themselves the Day,
 Morning-Star, and Noon-Sun, and Evening-Star,
 Being strong fools; and never a whit more wise
 The fourth, who always rideth arm'd in black,
 A huge man-beast of boundless savagery.
 He names himself the Night and oftener Death,
 And wears a helmet mounted with a skull,
 And bears a skeleton figured on his arms,
 To show that who may slay or scape the three,
 Slain by himself, shall enter endless night.
 And all these four be fools, but mighty men,
 And therefore am I come for Lancelot."

10

20

Hereat Sir Gareth call'd from where he rose,
 A head with kindling eyes above the throng,
 "A boon, Sir King—this quest!" then—for he
 mark'd

Kay near him groaning like a wounded bull—

"Yea, King, thou knowest thy kitchen-knave am I,
 And mighty thro' thy meats and drinks am I,
 And I can topple over a hundred such.

30

Thy promise, King," and Arthur glancing at him,
 Brought down a momentary brow. "Rough, sudden,
 And pardonable, worthy to be knight—
 Go therefore," and all hearers were amazed.

But on the damsel's forehead shame, pride, wrath
 Slew the May-white: she lifted either arm,

“Fie on thee, King! I ask’d for thy chief knight,
And thou hast given me but a kitchen-knave.”
Then ere a man in hall could stay her, turn’d,
Fled down the lane of access to the King,
Took horse, descended the slope street, and past
The weird white gate, and paused without, beside
The field of tourney, murmuring “kitchen-knave.”

Now two great entries open’d from the hall,
At one end one, that gave upon a range
Of level pavement where the King would pace 10
At sunrise, gazing over plain and wood;
And down from this a lordly stairway sloped
Till lost in blowing trees and tops of towers;
And out by this main doorway past the King.
But one was counter to the hearth, and rose
High that the highest-crested helm could ride
Therethro’ nor graze: and by this entry fled
The damsel in her wrath, and on to this
Sir Gareth strode, and saw without the door
King Arthur’s gift, the worth of half a town, 20
A warhorse of the best, and near it stood
The two that out of north had follow’d him:
This bare a maiden shield, a casque; that held
The horse, the spear; whereat Sir Gareth loosed
A cloak that dropt from collar-bone to heel,
A cloth of roughest web, and cast it down,
And from it like a fuel-smother’d fire,
That lookt half-dead, brake bright, and flash’d as
those

Dull-coated things, that making slide apart
Their dusk wing-cases, all beneath there burns 30
A jewell’d harness, ere they pass and fly.
So Gareth ere he parted flash’d in arms.
Then as he donn’d the helm, and took the shield
And mounted horse and graspt a spear, of grain
Storm-strengthen’d on a windy site, and tipt
With trenchant steel, around him slowly prest
The people, while from out of kitchen came
The thralls in throng, and seeing who had work’d
Lustier than any, and whom they could but love,
Mounted in arms, threw up their caps and cried, 40

"God bless the King, and all his fellowship!"
 And on thro' lanes of shouting Gareth rode
 Down the slope street, and past without the gate.

So Gareth past with joy; but as the cur
 Pluckt from the cur he fights with, ere his cause
 Be cool'd by fighting, follows, being named,
 His owner, but remembers all, and growls
 Remembering, so Sir Kay beside the door
 Mutter'd in scorn of Gareth whom he used
 To harry and hustle.

10

"Bound upon a quest

With horse and arms—the King hath past his time—
 My scullion knave! Thralls to your work again,
 For an your fire be low ye kindle mine!
 Will there be dawn in West and eve in East?
 Begone!—my knave!—belike and like enow
 Some old head-blow not heeded in his youth
 So shook his wits they wander in his prime—
 Crazed! How the villain lifted up his voice,
 Nor shamed to bawl himself a kitchen-knave.
 Tut: he was tame and meek enow with me, 20
 Till peacock'd up with Lancelot's noticing.
 Well—I will after my loud knave, and learn
 Whether he know me for his master yet.
 Out of the smoke he came, and so my lance
 Hold, by God's grace, he shall into the mire—
 Thence, if the King awaken from his craze,
 Into the smoke again."

30

But Lancelot said,
 "Kay, wherefore wilt thou go against the King,
 For that did never he whereon ye rail,
 But ever meekly served the King in thee?
 Abide: take counsel; for this lad is great
 And lusty, and knowing both of lance and sword."
 "Tut, tell not me," said Kay, "ye are overfine
 To mar stout knaves with foolish courtesies;"
 Then mounted, on thro' silent faces rode
 Down the slope city, and out beyond the gate.

But by the field of tourney lingering yet
Mutter'd the damsel, "Wherefore did the King
Scorn me? for, were Sir Lancelot lackt, at least
He might have yielded to me one of those
Who tilt for lady's love and glory here,
Rather than—O sweet heaven! O fie upon him—
His kitchen-knave."

To whom Sir Gareth drew
(And there were none but few goodlier than he)
Shining in arms, "Damsel, the quest is mine.
Lead, and I follow." She thereat, as one 10
That smells a foul-fleshed agaric in the holt,
And deems it carrion of some woodland thing,
Or shrew, or weasel, nipt her slender nose
With petulant thumb and finger, shrilling, "Hence!
Avoid, thou smellest all of kitchen-grease.
And look who comes behind," for there was Kay.
"Knowest thou not me? thy master? I am Kay.
We lack thee by the hearth."

And Gareth to him,
"Master no more! too well I know thee, ay—
The most ungentle knight in Arthur's hall." 20
"Have at thee then," said Kay: they shock'd, and
Kay
Fell shoulder-slipt, and Gareth cried again,
"Lead, and I follow," and fast away she fled.

But after sod and shingle ceased to fly
Behind her, and the heart of her good horse
Was nigh to burst with violence of the beat,
Perforce she stay'd, and overtaken spoke.

"What doest thou, scullion, in my fellowship?
Deem'st thou that I accept thee aught the more
Or love thee better, that by some device 30
Full cowardly, or by mere unhappiness,
Thou hast overthrown and slain thy master—thou!—
Dish-washer and broach-turner, loon!—to me
Thou smellest all of kitchen as before."

"Damsel," Sir Gareth answer'd gently, "say
Whate'er ye will, but whatsoe'er ye say,
I leave not till I finish this fair quest,
Or die therefore."

"Ay, wilt thou finish it?
Sweet lord, how like a noble knight he talks!
The listening rogue hath caught the manner of it.
But, knave, anon thou shalt be met with, knave,
And then by such a one that thou for all
The kitchen brewis that was ever supt
Shalt not once dare to look him in the face."

10

"I shall assay," said Gareth with a smile
That madden'd her, and away she flash'd again
Down the long avenues of a boundless wood,
And Gareth following was again beknaved.

"Sir Kitchen-knave, I have miss'd the only way
Where Arthur's men are set along the wood;
The wood is nigh as full of thieves as leaves:
If both be slain, I am rid of thee; but yet,
Sir Scullion, canst thou use that spit of thine?
Fight, as thou canst: I have miss'd the only way."

20

So till the dusk that follow'd evensong
Rode on the two, reviler and reviled;
Then after one long slope was mounted, saw,
Bowl-shaped, thro' tops of many thousand pines
A gloomy-gladed hollow slowly sink
To westward—in the deeps whereof a mere,
Round as the red eye of an Eagle-owl,
Under the half-dead sunset glared; and shouts
Ascended, and there brake a servingman
Flying from out of the black wood, and crying,
"They have bound my lord to cast him in the mere."
Then Gareth, "Bound am I to right the wrong'd,
But straitlier bound am I to hide with thee."
And when the damsel spake contemptuously,
"Lead, and I follow," Gareth cried again,
"Follow, I lead!" so down among the pines
He plunged; and there, blackshadow'd nigh the mere,

30

And mid-thigh-deep in bulrushes and reed,
 Saw six tall men haling a seventh along,
 A stone about his neck to drown him in it.
 Three with good blows he quieted, but three
 Fled thro' the pines; and Gareth loosed the stone
 From off his neck, then in the mere beside
 Tumbled it; oilily bubbled up the mere.
 Last, Gareth loosed his bonds and on free feet
 Set him, a stalwart Baron, Arthur's friend.

"Well that ye came, or else these caitiff rogues 10
 Had wreak'd themselves on me; good cause is theirs
 To hate me, for my wont hath ever been
 To catch my thief, and then like vermin here
 Drown him, and with a stone about his neck;
 And under this wan water many of them
 Lie rotting, but at night let go the stone,
 And rise, and flickering in a grimly light
 Dance on the mere. Good now, ye have saved a life
 Worth somewhat as the cleanser of this wood.
 And fain would I reward thee worshipfully. 20
 What guerdon will ye?"

Gareth sharply spake,
 "None! for the deed's sake have I done the deed,
 In uttermost obedience to the King.
 But wilt thou yield this damsel harbourage?"

Whereat the Baron saying, "I well believe
 You be of Arthur's Table," a light laugh
 Broke from Lynette, "Ay, truly of a truth,
 And in a sort, being Arthur's kitchen-knave!—
 But deem not I accept thee aught the more,
 Scullion, for running sharply with thy spit 30
 Down on a rout of craven foresters.
 A thresher with his flail had scatter'd them.
 Nay—for thou smellest of the kitchen still.
 But an this lord will yield us harbourage,
 Well."

So she spake. A league beyond the wood,
 All in a full-fair manor and a rich,

His towers where that day a feast had been
Held in high hall, and many a viand left,
And many a costly cate, received the three.
And there they placed a peacock in his pride
Before the damsel, and the Baron set
Gareth beside her, but at once she rose.

“Meseems, that here is much discourtesy,
Setting this knave, Lord Baron, at my side.
Hear me—this morn I stood in Arthur’s hall,
And pray’d the King would grant me Lancelot
To fight the brotherhood of Day and Night—
The last a monster unsubduable
Of any save of him for whom I call’d—
Suddenly bawls this frontless kitchen-knave,
‘The quest is mine; thy kitchen-knave am I,
And mighty thro’ thy meats and drinks am I.’
Then Arthur all at once gone mad replies,
‘Go therefore,’ and so gives the quest to him—
Him—here—a villain fitter to stick swine
Than ride abroad redressing women’s wrong,
Or sit beside a noble gentlewoman.”

10

20

Then half-ashamed and part-amazed, the lord
Now look’d at one and now at other, left
The damsel by the peacock in his pride,
And, seating Gareth at another board,
Sat down beside him, ate and then began.

“Friend, whether thou be kitchen-knave, or not,
Or whether it be the maiden’s fantasy,
And whether she be mad, or else the King,
Or both or neither, or thyself be mad,
I ask not: but thou strikest a strong stroke,
For strong thou art and goodly therewithal,
And saver of my life; and therefore now,
For here be mighty men to joust with, weigh
Whether thou wilt not with thy damsel back
To crave again Sir Lancelot of the King.
Thy pardon; I but speak for thine avail,
The saver of my life.”

30

And Gareth said,

"Full pardon, but I follow up the quest,
Despite of Day and Night and Death and Hell."

So when, next morn, the lord whose life he saved
Had, some brief space, convey'd them on their way
And left them with God-speed, Sir Gareth spake,
"Lead, and I follow." Haughtily she replied,

"I fly no more: I allow thee for an hour.
Lion and stoat have isled together, knave,
In time of flood. Nay, furthermore, methinks 10
Some ruth is mine for thee. Back wilt thou, fool?
For hard by here is one will overthrow
And slay thee: then will I to court again,
And shame the King for only yielding me
My champion from the ashes of his hearth."

To whom Sir Gareth answer'd courteously,
"Say thou thy say, and I will do my deed.
Allow me for mine hour, and thou wilt find
My fortunes all as fair as hers who lay
Among the ashes and wedded the King's son." 20

Then to the shore of one of those long loops
Wherethro' the serpent river coil'd, they came.
Rough-thicketed were the banks and steep; the
stream

Full, narrow; this a bridge of single arc
Took at a leap; and on the further side
Arose a silk pavilion, gay with gold
In streaks and rays, and all Lent-lily in hue,
Save that the dome was purple, and above,
Crimson, a slender banneret fluttering. 30
And therefore the lawless warrior paced
Unarm'd, and calling, "Damsel, is this he,
The champion thou hast brought from Arthur's hall?
For whom we let thee pass." "Nay, nay," she said,
"Sir Morning-Star. The King in utter scorn
Of thee and thy much folly hath sent thee here
His kitchen-knave: and look thou to thyself:

See that he fall not on thee suddenly,
And slay thee unarm'd: he is not knight but knave."

Then at his call, "O daughters of the Dawn,
And servants of the Morning-Star, approach,
Arm me," from out the silken curtain-folds
Bare-footed and bare-headed three fair girls
In gilt and rosy raiment came: their feet
In dewy grasses glisten'd; and the hair
All over glanced with dewdrop or with gem
Like sparkles in the stone Avanturine.
These arm'd him in blue arms, and gave a shield
Blue also, and thereon the morning star.
And Gareth silent gazed upon the knight,
Who stood a moment, ere his horse was brought,
Glorying; and in the stream beneath him, shone
Immingled with Heaven's azure waveringly,
The gay pavilion and the naked feet,
His arms, the rosy raiment, and the star.

10

Then she that watch'd him, "Wherefore stare
ye so?
Thou shakest in thy fear: there yet is time:
Flee down the valley before he get to horse.
Who will cry shame? Thou art not knight but
knave."

20

Said Gareth, "Damsel, whether knave or knight,
Far liefer had I fight a score of times
Than hear thee so missay me and revile.
Fair words were best for him who fights for thee;
But truly foul are better, for they send
That strength of anger thro' mine arms, I know
That I shall overthrow him."

And he that bore
The star, when mounted, cried from o'er the bridge, 30
"A kitchen-knave, and sent in scorn of me!
Such fight not I, but answer scorn with scorn.
For this were shame to do him further wrong
Than set him on his feet, and take his horse
And arms, and so return him to the King.

Come, therefore, leave thy lady lightly, knave.
Avoid: for it beseemeth not a knave
To ride with such a lady."

"Dog, thou liest.

I spring from loftier lineage than thine own."
He spake; and all at fiery speed the two
Shock'd on the central bridge, and either spear
Bent but not brake, and either knight at once,
Hurl'd as a stone from out of a catapult
Beyond his horse's crupper and the bridge,
Fell, as if dead; but quickly rose and drew, 10
And Gareth lash'd so fiercely with his brand
He drave his enemy backward down the bridge,
The damsel crying, "Well-stricken, kitchen-knave!"
Till Gareth's shield was cloven; but one stroke
Laid him that clove it grovelling on the ground.

Then cried the fall'n, "Take not my life: I yield."
And Gareth, "So this damsel ask it of me
Good—I accord it easily as a grace."
She reddening, "Insolent scullion: I of thee?
I bound to thee for any favour ask'd!" 20
"Then shall he die." And Gareth there unlaced
His helmet as to slay him, but she shriek'd,
"Be not so hardy, scullion, as to slay
One nobler than thyself." "Damsel, thy charge
Is an abounding pleasure to me. Knight,
Thy life is thine at her command. Arise
And quickly pass to Arthur's hall, and say
His kitchen-knave hath sent thee. See thou crave
His pardon for thy breaking of his laws.
Myself, when I return, will plead for thee. 30
Thy shield is mine—farewell; and, damsel, thou,
Lead, and I follow."

And fast away she fled.

Then when he came upon her, spake, "Methought,
Knave, when I watch'd thee striking on the bridge
The savour of thy kitchen came upon me
A little faintlier: but the wind hath changed:
I scent it twenty-fold." And then she sang

"'O morning star' (not that tall felon there
Whom thou by sorcery or unhappiness
Or some device, hast foully overthrown),
'O morning star that smilest in the blue,
O star, my morning dream hath proven true,
Smile sweetly, thou! my love hath smiled on me.'

"But thou begone, take counsel, and away,
For hard by here is one that guards a ford—
The second brother in their fool's parable—
Will pay thee all thy wages, and to boot. 10
Care not for shame: thou art not knight but knave."

To whom Sir Gareth answer'd, laughingly,
"Parables? Hear a parable of the knave.
When I was kitchen-knave among the rest
Fierce was the hearth, and one of my co-mates
Own'd a rough dog, to whom he cast his coat,
'Guard it,' and there was none to meddle with it.
And such a coat art thou, and thee the King
Gave me to guard, and such a dog am I,
To worry, and not to flee—and—knight or knave— 20
The knave that doth thee service as full knight
Is all as good, meseems, as any knight
Toward thy sister's freeing."

"Ay, Sir Knave!
Ay, knave, because thou strikest as a knight,
Being but knave, I hate thee all the more."

"Fair damsel, you should worship me the more,
That, being but knave, I throw thine enemies."

"Ay, ay," she said, "but thou shalt meet thy
match."

So when they touch'd the second river-loop,
Huge on a huge red horse, and all in mail
Burnish'd to blinding, shone the Noonday Sun
Beyond a raging shallow. As if the flower,
That blows a globe of after arrowlets,

Ten thousand-fold had grown, flash'd the fierce
shield,

All sun; and Gareth's eyes had flying blots
Before them when he turn'd from watching him.
He from beyond the roaring shallow roar'd,
"What doest thou, brother, in my marches here?"
And she athwart the shallow shrill'd again,
"Here is a kitchen-knave from Arthur's hall
Hath overthrown thy brother, and hath his arms."
"Ugh!" cried the Sun, and vizoring up a red
And cipher face of rounded foolishness, 10
Push'd horse across the foamings of the ford,
Whom Gareth met midstream: no room was there
For lance or tourney-skill: four strokes they struck
With sword, and these were mighty; the new knight
Had fear he might be ashamed; but as the Sun
Heaved up a ponderous arm to strike the fifth,
The hoof of his horse slipt in the stream, the stream
Descended, and the Sun was wash'd away.

Then Gareth laid his lance athwart the ford;
So drew him home; but he that fought no more, 20
As being all bone-batter'd on the rock,
Yielded; and Gareth sent him to the King.
"Myself when I return will plead for thee."
"Lead, and I follow." Quietly she led.
"Hath not the good wind, damsel, changed again?"
"Nay, not a point: nor art thou victor here.
There lies a ridge of slate across the ford;
His horse thereon stumbled—ay, for I saw it.

"'O Sun' (not this strong fool whom thou, Sir
Knave,
Hast overthrown thro' mere unhappiness), 30
'O Sun, that wakenest all to bliss or pain,
O moon, that layest all to sleep again,
Shine sweetly: twice my love hath smiled on me.'

"What knowest thou of lovesong or of love?
Nay, nay, God wot, so thou wert nobly born,
Thou hast a pleasant presence. Yea, perchance,—

“ ‘O dewy flowers that open to the sun,
O dewy flowers that close when day is done,
Blow sweetly: twice my love hath smiled on me.’

“What knowest thou of flowers, except, belike,
To garnish meats with? hath not our good King
Who lent me thee, the flower of kitchendom,
A foolish love for flowers? what stick ye round
The pasty? wherewithal deck the boar’s head?
Flowers? nay, the boar hath rosemaries and bay.

“ ‘O birds, that warble to the morning sky,
O birds that warble as the day goes by,
Sing sweetly: twice my love hath smiled on me.’ 10

“What knowest thou of birds, lark, mavis, merle,
Linnet? what dream ye when they utter forth
May-music growing with the growing light,
Their sweet sun-worship? these be for the snare
(So runs thy fancy) these be for the spit,
Larding and basting. See thou have not now
Larded thy last, except thou turn and fly.
There stands the third fool of their allegory.” 20

For there beyond a bridge of treble bow,
All in a rose-red from the west, and all
Naked it seem’d, and glowing in the broad
Deep-dimpled current underneath, the knight,
That named himself the Star of Evening, stood.

And Gareth, “Wherefore waits the madman here
Naked in open dayshine?” “Nay,” she cried,
“Not naked, only wrapt in harden’d skins
That fit him like his own; and so ye cleave
His armour off him, these will turn the blade.” 30

Then the third brother shouted o’er the bridge,
“O brother-star, why shine ye here so low?
Thy ward is higher up: but have ye slain
The damsel’s champion?” and the damsel cried,

"No star of thine, but shot from Arthur's heaven
With all disaster unto thine and thee!
For both thy younger brethren have gone down
Before this youth; and so wilt thou, Sir Star;
Art thou not old?"

"Old, damsel, old and hard,
Old, with the might and breath of twenty boys.'
Said Gareth, "Old and over-bold in brag!
But that same strength which threw the Morning-
Star
Can throw the Evening."

Then that other blew
A hard and deadly note upon the horn.
"Approach and arm me!" With slow steps from out ¹⁰
An old storm-beaten, russet, many-stain'd
Pavilion, forth a grizzled damsel came,
And arm'd him in old arms, and brought a helm
With but a drying evergreen for crest,
And gave a shield whereon the Star of Even
Half-tarnish'd and half-bright, his emblem, shone.
But when it glitter'd o'er the saddle-bow,
They madly hurl'd together on the bridge;
And Gareth overthrew him, lighted, drew, ²⁰
There met him drawn, and overthrew him again,
But up like fire he started: and as oft
As Gareth brought him grovelling on his knees,
So many a time he vaulted up again;
Till Gareth panted hard, and his great heart,
Foredooming all his trouble was in vain,
Labour'd within him, for he seem'd as one
That all in later, sadder age begins
To war against ill uses of a life,
But these from all his life arise, and cry, ³⁰
"Thou hast made us lords, and canst not put us
down!"
He half despairs; so Gareth seem'd to strike
Vainly, the damsel clamouring all the while,
"Well done, knave-knight, well stricken, O good
knight-knave—
O knave, as noble as any of all the knights—

Shame me not, shame me not. I have prophesied—
 Strike, thou art worthy of the Table Round—
 His arms are old, he trusts the harden'd skin—
 Strike—strike—the wind will never change again.”
 And Gareth hearing ever stronglier smote,
 And hew'd great pieces of his armour off him,
 But lash'd in vain against the harden'd skin,
 And could not wholly bring him under, more
 Than loud Southwesterns, rolling ridge on ridge,
 The buoy that rides at sea, and dips and springs
 For ever; till at length Sir Gareth's brand
 Clash'd his, and brake it utterly to the hilt.
 “I have thee now;” but forth that other sprang,
 And, all unknighthlike, writhed his wiry arms
 Around him, till he felt, despite his mail,
 Strangled, but straining ev'n his uttermost
 Cast, and so hurl'd him headlong o'er the bridge
 Down to the river, sink or swim, and cried,
 “Lead, and I follow.”

10

But the damsel said,
 “I lead no longer; ride thou at my side;
 Thou art the kingliest of all kitchen-knaves.

20

“O trefoil, sparkling on the rainy plain,
 O rainbow with three colours after rain,
 Shine sweetly: thrice my love hath smiled on me.’

“Sir,—and, good faith, I fain had added—Knight,
 But that I heard thee call thyself a knave,—
 Shamed am I that I so rebuked, reviled,
 Missaid thee; noble I am; and thought the King
 Scorn'd me and mine; and now thy pardon, friend,
 For thou hast ever answer'd courteously,
 And wholly bold thou art, and meek withal
 As any of Arthur's best, but, being knave,
 Hast mazed my wit: I marvel what thou art.”

30

“Damsel,” he said, “you be not all to blame,
 Saving that you mistrusted our good King
 Would handle scorn, or yield you, asking, one
 Not fit to cope your quest. You said your say;

Mine answer was my deed. Good sooth! I hold
 He scarce is knight, yea but half-man, nor meet
 To fight for gentle damsel, he, who lets
 His heart be stirred with any foolish heat
 At any gentle damsel's waywardness.
 Shamed? care not! thy foul sayings fought for me:
 And seeing now thy words are fair, methinks
 There rides no knight, not Lancelot, his great self,
 Hath force to quell me."

Nigh upon that hour

When the lone hennet forgets his melancholy,
 Lets down his other leg, and stretching, dreams
 Of goodly supper in the distant pool,
 Then turn'd the noble damsel smiling at him,
 And told him of a cavern hard at hand,
 Where bread and baken meats and good red wine
 Of Southland, which the Lady Lyonors
 Had sent her coming champion, waited him.

Anon they past a narrow comb wherein
 Were slabs of rock with figures, knights on horse
 Sculptured, and deckt in slowly-waning hues.
 "Sir Knave, my knight, a hermit once was here,
 Whose holy hand hath fashion'd on the rock
 The war of Time against the soul of man.
 And yon four fools have suck'd their allegory
 From these damp walls, and taken but the form.
 Know ye not these?" and Gareth lookt and read—
 In letters like to those the vexillary
 Hath left crag-carven o'er the streaming Gelt—
 "PHOSPHORUS," then "MERIDIES"—"HESPERUS"—
 "NOX"—"MORS," beneath five figures, armed men,
 Slab after slab, their faces forward all,
 And running down the Soul, a Shape that fled
 With broken wings, torn raiment and loose hair,
 For help and shelter to the hermit's cave.
 "Follow the faces, and we find it. Look,
 Who comes behind?"

For one—delay'd at first

Thro' helping back the dislocated Kay

To Camelot, then by what thereafter chanced,
 The damsel's headlong error thro' the wood—
 Sir Lancelot, having swum the river-loops—
 His blue shield-lions cover'd—softly drew
 Behind the twain, and when he saw the star
 Gleam, on Sir Gareth's turning to him, cried,
 "Stay, felon knight, I avenge me for my friend."
 And Gareth crying prick'd against the cry;
 But when they closed—in a moment—at one touch
 Of that skill'd spear, the wonder of the world— 10
 Went sliding down so easily, and fell,
 That when he found the grass within his hands
 He laugh'd; the laughter jarr'd upon Lynette:
 Harshly she asked him, "Shamed and overthrown,
 And tumbled back into the kitchen-knave,
 Why laugh ye? that ye blew your boast in vain?"
 "Nay, noble damsel, but that I, the son
 Of old King Lot and good Queen Bellicent,
 And victor of the bridges and the ford,
 And knight of Arthur, here lie thrown by whom 20
 I know not, all thro' mere unhappiness—
 Device and sorcery and unhappiness—
 Out, sword; we are thrown!" And Lancelot an-
 swer'd, "Prince,
 O Gareth—thro' the mere unhappiness
 Of one who came to help thee, not to harm,
 Lancelot, and all as glad to find thee whole,
 As on the day when Arthur knighted him."

Then Gareth, "Thou—Lancelot!—thine the hand
 That threw me? An some chance to mar the boast
 Thy brethren of thee make—which could not 30
 chance—

Had sent thee down before a lesser spear,
 Shamed had I been, and sad—O Lancelot—thou!"

Whereat the maiden, petulant, "Lancelot,
 Why came ye not, when call'd? and wherefore now
 Come ye, not call'd? I gloried in my knave,
 Who being still rebuked, would answer still
 Courteous as any knight—but now, if knight,
 The marvel dies, and leaves me fool'd and trick'd,

And only wondering wherefore play'd upon:
 And doubtful whether I and mine be scorn'd.
 Where should be truth if not in Arthur's hall,
 In Arthur's presence? Knight, knave, prince and
 fool,
 I hate thee and for ever."

And Lancelot said,
 "Blessed be thou, Sir Gareth! knight art thou
 To the King's best wish. O damsel, be you wise
 To call him shamed, who is but overthrown?
 Thrown have I been, nor once, but many a time.
 Victor from vanquish'd issues at the last, 10
 And overthrower from being overthrown.
 With sword we have not striven; and thy good horse
 And thou are weary; yet not less I felt
 Thy manhood thro' that wearied lance of thine.
 Well hast thou done; for all the stream is freed,
 And thou hast wreak'd his justice on his foes,
 And when reviled, hast answer'd graciously,
 And makest merry when overthrown. Prince,
 Knight,
 Hail, Knight and Prince, and of our Table Round!"

And then when turning to Lynette he told 20
 The tale of Gareth, petulantly she said,
 "Ay well—ay well—for worse than being fool'd
 Of others, is to fool one's self. A cave,
 Sir Lancelot, is hard by, with meats and drinks
 And forage for the horse, and flint for fire.
 But all about it flies a honeysuckle.
 Seek, till we find." And when they sought and
 found,
 Sir Gareth drank and ate, and all his life
 Past into sleep; on whom the maiden gazed.
 "Sound sleep be thine! sound cause to sleep hast 30
 thou.
 Wake lusty! Seem I not as tender to him
 As any mother? Ay, but such a one
 As all day long hath rated at her child,
 And vext his day but blesses him asleep—
 Good lord, how sweetly smells the honeysuckle

In the hush'd night, as if the world were one
 Of utter peace, and love, and gentleness!
 ("Lancelot, Lancelot"—and she clapt her hands—
 "Full merry am I to find my goodly knave
 Is knight and noble. See now, sworn have I,
 Else yon black felon had not let me pass,
 To bring thee back to do the battle with him.
 Thus an thou goest, he will fight thee first;
 Who doubts thee victor? so will my knight-knave
 Miss the full flower of this accomplishment." 10

Said Lancelot, "Peradventure he, you name,
 May know my shield. Let Gareth, an he will,
 Change his for mine, and take my charger, fresh,
 Not to be spurr'd, loving the battle as well
 As he that rides him." "Lancelot-like," she said,
 "Courteous in this, Lord Lancelot, as in all."

And Gareth, wakening, fiercely clutch'd the shield;
 "Ramp ye lance-splintering lions, on whom all spears
 Are rotten sticks! ye seem agape to roar!
 Yea, ramp and roar at leaving of your lord!— 20
 Care not, good beasts, so well I care for you.
 O noble Lancelot, from my hold on these
 Streams virtue—fire—thro' one that will not shame
 Even the shadow of Lancelot under shield.
 Hence: let us go."

Silent the silent field
 They traversed. Arthur's harp tho' summer-wan,
 In counter motion to the clouds, allured
 The glance of Gareth dreaming on his liege.
 A star shot: "Lo," said Gareth, "the foe falls!"
 An owl whoopt: "Hark the victor pealing there!" 30
 Suddenly she that rode upon his left
 Clung to the shield that Lancelot lent him, crying,
 "Yield, yield him this again: 'tis he must fight:
 I curse the tongue that all thro' yesterday
 Reviled thee, and hath wrought on Lancelot now
 To lend thee horse and shield: wonders ye have
 done;
 Miracles ye cannot: here is glory enow

In having flung the three: I see thee maim'd,
Mangled: I swear thou canst not fling the fourth."

"And wherefore, damsel? tell me all ye know.
You cannot scare me; nor rough face, or voice,
Brute bulk of limb, or boundless savagery
Appal me from the quest."

"Nay, Prince," she cried,
"God wot, I never look'd upon the face,
Seeing he never rides abroad by day;
But watch'd him have I like a phantom pass
Chilling the night: nor have I heard the voice. 10
Always he made his mouthpiece of a page
Who came and went, and still reported him
As closing in himself the strength of ten,
And when his anger tare him, massacring
Man, woman, lad and girl—yea, the soft babe!
Some hold that he hath swallow'd infant flesh,
Monster! O Prince, I went for Lancelot first,
The quest is Lancelot's: give him back the shield."

Said Gareth laughing, "An he fight for this,
Belike he wins it as the better man: 20
Thus—and not else!"

But Lancelot on him urged
All the devisings of their chivalry
When one might meet a mightier than himself;
How best to manage horse, lance, sword and shield,
And so fill up the gap where force might fail
With skill and fineness. Instant were his words.

Then Gareth, "Here be rules. I know but one—
To dash against mine enemy and to win.
Yet have I watch'd thee victor in the joust,
And seen thy way." "Heaven help thee," sigh'd 30
Lynette.

Then for a space, and under cloud that grew
To thunder-gloom palling all stars, they rode
In converse till she made her palfrey halt,

Lifted an arm, and softly whisper'd, "There."
 And all the three were silent seeing, pitch'd
 Beside the Castle Perilous on flat field,
 A huge pavilion like a mountain peak
 Sunder the glooming crimson on the marge,
 Black, with black banner, and a long black horn
 Beside it hanging; which Sir Gareth graspt,
 And so, before the two could hinder him,
 Sent all his heart and breath thro' all the horn.
 Echo'd the walls; a light twinkled; anon
 Came lights and lights, and once again he blew;
 Whereon were hollow tramlings up and down
 And muffled voices heard, and shadows past;
 Till high above him, circled with her maids,
 The Lady Lyonors at a window stood,
 Beautiful among lights, and waving to him
 White hands, and courtesy; but when the Prince
 Three times had blown—after long hush—at last—
 The huge pavilion slowly yielded up,
 Thro' those black foldings, that which housed 20
 therein.

High on a nightblack horse, in nightblack arms,
 With white breast-bone, and barren ribs of Death,
 And crown'd with fleshless laughter—some ten
 steps—

In the half-light—thro' the dim dawn—advanced
 The monster, and then paused, and spake no word.

But Gareth spake and all indignantly,
 "Fool, for thou hast, men say, the strength of ten,
 Canst thou not trust the limbs thy God hath given,
 But must, to make the terror of thee more,
 Trick thyself out in ghastly imageries 30
 Of that which Life hath done with, and the clod,
 Less dull than thou, will hide with mantling flowers
 As if for pity?" But he spake no word;
 Which set the horror higher: a maiden swoon'd;
 The Lady Lyonors wrung her hands and wept,
 As doom'd to be the bride of Night and Death;
 Sir Gareth's head prickled beneath his helm;
 And ev'n Sir Lancelot thro' his warm blood felt
 Ice strike, and all that mark'd him were aghast.

At once Sir Lancelot's charger fiercely neigh'd,
And Death's dark war-horse bounded forward with
him.

Then those that did not blink the terror, saw
That Death was cast to ground, and slowly rose.
But with one stroke Sir Gareth split the skull.
Half fell to right and half to left and lay.
Then with a stronger buffet he clove the helm
As throughly as the skull; and out from this
Issued the bright face of a blooming boy
Fresh as a flower new-born, and crying, "Knight, 10
Slay me not: my three brethren bade me do it,
To make a horror all about the house,
And stay the world from Lady Lyonors.
They never dream'd the passes would be past."
Answer'd Sir Gareth graciously to one
Not many a moon his younger, "My fair child,
What madness made thee challenge the chief knight
Of Arthur's hall?" "Fair Sir, they bade me do it.
They hate the King, and Lancelot, the King's friend,
They hoped to slay him somewhere on the stream, 20
They never dream'd the passes could be past."

Then sprang the happier day from underground;
And Lady Lyonors and her house, with dance
And revel and song, made merry over Death,
As being after all their foolish fears
And horrors only proven a blooming boy.
So large mirth lived and Gareth won the quest.

And he that told the tale in older times
Says that Sir Gareth wedded Lyonors,
But he, that told it later, says Lynette. 30

THE MARRIAGE OF GERAINT

The brave Geraint, a knight of Arthur's court,
A tributary prince of Devon, one
Of that great Order of the Table Round,
Had wedded Enid, Yniol's only child,
And loved her, as he loved the light of Heaven.
And as the light of Heaven varies, now

At sunrise, now at sunset, now by night
With moon and trembling stars, so loved Geraint
To make her beauty vary day by day,
In crimsons and in purples and in gems.
And Enid, but to please her husband's eye,
Who first had found and loved her in a state
Of broken fortunes, daily fronted him
In some fresh splendour; and the Queen herself,
Grateful to Prince Geraint for service done,
Lov'd her, and often with her own white hands 10
Array'd and deck'd her, as the loveliest,
Next after her own self, in all the court.
And Enid loved the Queen, and with true heart
Adored her, as the stateliest and the best
And loveliest of all women upon earth.
And seeing them so tender and so close,
Long in their common love rejoiced Geraint.
But when a rumour rose about the Queen,
Touching her guilty love for Lancelot,
Though yet there lived no proof, nor yet was heard 20
The world's loud whisper breaking into storm,
Not less Geraint believed it; and there fell
A horror on him, lest his gentle wife,
Through that great tenderness for Guinevere,
Had suffer'd, or should suffer any taint
In nature: wherefore going to the King,
He made this pretext, that his principedom lay
Close on the borders of a territory,
Wherein were bandit earls, and caitiff knights,
Assassins, and all flyers from the hand 30
Of Justice, and whatever loathes a law:
And therefore, till the King himself should please
To cleanse this common sewer of all his realm,
He craved a fair permission to depart,
And there defend his marches; and the King
Mused for a little on his plea, but, last,
Allowing it, the Prince and Enid rode,
And fifty knights rode with them, to the shores
Of Severn, and they pass'd to their own land;
Where, thinking, that if ever yet was wife 40
True to her lord, mine shall be so to me,
He compass'd her with sweet observances

And worship, never leaving her, and grew
Forgetful of his promise to the King,
Forgetful of the falcon and the hunt,
Forgetful of the tilt and tournament,
Forgetful of his glory and his name,
Forgetful of his principedom and its cares.
And this forgetfulness was hateful to her.
And by-and-by the people, when they met
In twos and threes, or fuller companies,
Began to scoff and jeer and babble of him
As of a prince whose manhood was all gone,
And molten down in mere uxoriousness.
And this she gather'd from the people's eyes;
This too the women who attired her head,
To please her, dwelling on his boundless love,
Told Enid, and they sadden'd her the more:
And day by day she thought to tell Geraint,
But could not out of bashful delicacy;
While he that watch'd her sadden, was the more
Suspicious that her nature had a taint.

10

20

At last it chanced that on a summer morn
(They sleeping each by other) the new sun
Beat through the blindless casement of the room,
And heated the strong warrior in his dreams;
Who, moving, cast the coverlet aside,
And bared the knotted column of his throat,
The massive square of his heroic breast,
And arms on which the standing muscle sloped,
As slopes a wild brook o'er a little stone,
Running too vehemently to break upon it.
And Enid woke and sat beside the couch,
Admiring him, and thought within herself,
Was ever man so grandly made as he?
Then, like a shadow, pass'd the people's talk
And accusation of uxoriousness
Across her mind, and bowing over him,
Low to her own heart piteously she said:

30

"O noble breast and all-puissant arms,
Am I the cause, I the poor cause that men
Reproach you, saying all your force is gone?"

40

I *am* the cause, because I dare not speak
 And tell him what I think and what they say.
 And yet I hate that he should linger here;
 I cannot love my lord and not his name.
 Far liefer had I gird his harness on him,
 And ride with him to battle and stand by,
 And watch his mightful hand striking great blows
 At caitiffs and at wrongers of the world.
 Far better were I laid in the dark earth,
 Not hearing any more his noble voice, 10
 Not to be folded more in these dear arms,
 And darken'd from the high light in his eyes,
 Than that my lord through me should suffer shame.
 Am I so bold, and could I so stand by,
 And see my dear lord wounded in the strife,
 Or maybe pierc'd to death before mine eyes,
 And yet not dare to tell him what I think,
 And how men slur him, saying all his force
 Is melted into mere effeminacy?
 O me, I fear that I am no true wife." 20

Half inwardly, half audibly she spoke,
 And the strong passion in her made her weep
 True tears upon his broad and naked breast,
 And these awoke him, and by great mischance
 He heard but fragments of her later words,
 And that she fear'd she was not a true wife.
 And then he thought, "In spite of all my care,
 For all my pains, poor man, for all my pains,
 She is not faithful to me, and I see her
 Weeping for some gay knight in Arthur's hall." 30
 Then though he lov'd and reverenc'd her too much
 To dream she could be guilty of foul act,
 Right through his manful breast darted the pang
 That makes a man, in the sweet face of her
 Whom he loves most, lonely and miserable.
 At this he hurl'd his huge limbs out of bed,
 And shook his drowsy squire awake and cried,
 "My charger and her palfrey;" then to her,
 "I will ride forth into the wilderness;
 For though it seems my spurs are yet to win, 40
 I have not fall'n so low as some would wish.

And you, put on your worst and meanest dress
And ride with me." And Enid ask'd, amaz'd,
"If Enid errs, let Enid learn her fault."
But he, "I charge you, ask not, but obey."
Then she bethought her of a faded silk,
A faded mantle and a faded veil,
And moving toward a cedarn cabinet,
Wherein she kept them folded reverently
With sprigs of summer laid between the folds,
She took them, and array'd herself therein, 10
Remembering when first he came on her
Drest in that dress, and how he lov'd her in it
And all her foolish fears about the dress,
And all his journey to her, as himself
Had told her, and their coming to the court.

For Arthur on the Whitsuntide before
Held court at old Caerleon upon Usk.
There on a day, he sitting high in hall,
Before him came a forester of Dean, 20
Wet from the woods, with notice of a hart
Taller than all his fellows, milky white,
First seen that day: these things he told the King.
Then the good King gave order to let blow
His horns for hunting on the morrow morn.
And when the Queen petition'd for his leave
To see the hunt, allow'd it easily.
So with the morning all the court were gone.
But Guinevere lay late into the morn,
Lost in sweet dreams, and dreaming of her love 30
For Lancelot, and forgetful of the hunt;
But rose at last, a single maiden with her,
Took horse, and forded Usk, and gain'd the wood;
There, on a little knoll beside it, stay'd
Waiting to hear the hounds; but heard instead
A sudden sound of hoofs, for Prince Geraint,
Late also, wearing neither hunting-dress
Nor weapon, save a golden-hilted brand,
Came quickly flashing through the shallow ford
Behind them, and so gallop'd up the knoll.
A purple scarf, at either end whereof 40
There swung an apple of the purest gold,

Sway'd round about him, as he gallop'd up
To join them, glancing like a dragon-fly
In summer suit and silks of holiday.
Low bow'd the tributary Prince, and she,
Sweetly and statelily, and with all grace
Of womanhood and queenhood, answer'd him:
"Late, late, Sir Prince," she said, "later than we!"
"Yea, noble Queen," he answer'd, "and so late
That I but come like you to see the hunt,
Not join it." "Therefore wait with me," she said; 10
"For on this little knoll, if anywhere,
There is good chance that we shall hear the hounds:
Here often they break covert at our feet."

And while they listen'd for the distant hunt,
And chiefly for the baying of Cavall,
King Arthur's hound of deepest mouth, there rode
Full slowly by a knight, lady, and dwarf;
Whereof the dwarf lagg'd latest, and the knight
Had vizor up, and show'd a youthful face,
Imperious, and of haughtiest lineaments. 20
And Guinevere, not mindful of his face
In the King's hall, desired his name, and sent
Her maiden to demand it of the dwarf;
Who being vicious, old and irritable,
And doubling all his master's vice of pride,
Made answer sharply that she should not know.
"Then will I ask it of himself," she said.
"Nay, by my faith, thou shalt not," cried the dwarf;
"Thou art not worthy ev'n to speak of him;" 30
And when she put her horse toward the knight,
Struck at her with his whip, and she return'd
Indignant to the Queen; at which Geraint
Exclaiming, "Surely I will learn the name,"
Made sharply to the dwarf, and ask'd it of him,
Who answer'd as before; and when the Prince
Had put his horse in motion toward the knight,
Struck at him with his whip, and cut his cheek.
The Prince's blood spirted upon the scarf,
Dyeing it; and his quick, instinctive hand
Caught at the hilt, as to abolish him: 40
But he, from his exceeding manfulness

And pure nobility of temperament,
Wroth to be wroth at such a worm, refrain'd
From ev'n a word, and so returning said:

"I will avenge this insult, noble Queen,
Done in your maiden's person to yourself:
And I will track this vermin to their earths;
For though I ride unarm'd, I do not doubt
To find, at some place I shall come at, arms
On loan, or else for pledge; and, being found,
Then will I fight him, and will break his pride, 10
And on the third day will again be here,
So that I be not fall'n in fight. Farewell."

"Farewell, fair Prince," answered the stately
Queen.

"Be prosperous in this journey, as in all;
And may you light on all things that you love,
And live to wed with her whom first you love
But ere you wed with any, bring your bride,
And I, were she the daughter of a king,
Yea, though she were a beggar from the hedge,
Will clothe her for her bridals like the sun." 20

And Prince Geraint, now thinking that he heard
The noble hart at bay, now the far horn,
A little vex'd at losing of the hunt,
A little at the vile occasion, rode,
By ups and downs, through many a grassy glade
And valley, with fix'd eye following the three.
At last they issued from the world of wood,
And climb'd upon a fair and even ridge,
And show'd themselves against the sky, and sank.
And thither came Geraint, and underneath 30
Beheld the long street of a little town
In a long valley, on one side of which,
White from the mason's hand, a fortress rose;
And on one side a castle in decay,
Beyond a bridge that spann'd a dry ravine:
And out of town and valley came a noise
As of a broad brook o'er a shingly bed

Brawling, or like a clamour of the rooks
At distance, ere they settle for the night.

And onward to the fortress rode the three,
And enter'd, and were lost behind the walls.
"So," thought Geraint, "I have track'd him to his
earth."

And down the long street riding wearily,
Found every hostel full, and everywhere
Was hammer laid to hoof, and the hot hiss
And bustling whistle of the youth who scour'd
His master's armour; and of such a one 10
He ask'd, "What means the tumult in the town?"
Who told him, scouring still, "The sparrow-hawk!"
Then riding close behind an ancient churl,
Who, smitten by the dusty sloping beam,
Went sweating underneath a sack of corn,
Ask'd yet once more what meant the hubbub here?
Who answer'd gruffly, "Ugh! the sparrow-hawk."
Then riding further past an armourer's,
Who, with back turn'd, and bow'd above his work,
Sat riveting a helmet on his knee, 20
He put the self-same query; but the man
Not turning round, nor looking at him, said:
"Friend, he that labours for the sparrow-hawk
Has little time for idle questioners."

Whereat Geraint flash'd into sudden spleen:
"A thousand pips eat up your sparrow-hawk!
 Tits, wrens, and all wing'd nothings peck him dead!
 Ye think the rustic cackle of your bourg
 The murmur of the world! What is it to me?
 O wretched set of sparrows, one and all, 30
 Who pipe of nothing but of sparrow-hawks!
 Speak, if you be not like the rest, hawk-mad,
 Where can I get me harbourage for the night?
 And arms, arms, arms to fight my enemy? Speak!"
 At this the armourer, turning all amazed
 And seeing one so gay in purple silks,
 Came forward with the helmet yet in hand,
 And answer'd, "Pardon me, O stranger knight;
 We hold a tourney here to-morrow morn,
 And there is scanty time for half the work. 40

Arms? truth! I know not: all are wanted here.
Harbourage? truth, good truth, I know not, save,
It may be, at Earl Yniol's, o'er the bridge
Yonder." He spoke, and fell to work again.

Then rode Geraint, a little spleenful yet,
Across the bridge that spann'd the dry ravine.
There musing sat the hoary-headed Earl
(His dress a suit of fray'd magnificence,
Once fit for feasts of ceremony), and said:
"Whither, fair son?" to whom Geraint replied, 10
"O friend, I seek a harbourage for the night."
Then Yniol, "Enter, therefore, and partake
The slender entertainment of a house
Once rich, now poor, but ever open-door'd."
"Thanks, venerable friend," replied Geraint;
"So that you do not serve me sparrow-hawks
For supper, I will enter, I will eat
With all the passion of a twelve hours' fast."
Then sigh'd and smil'd the hoary-headed Earl,
And answer'd, "Graver cause than yours is mine 20
To curse this hedgerow thief, the sparrow-hawk.
But in, go in; for save yourself desire it,
We will not touch upon him ev'n in jest."

Then rode Geraint into the castle court,
His charger trampling many a prickly star
Of sprouted thistle on the broken stones.
He look'd, and saw that all was ruinous.
Here stood a shatter'd archway plumed with fern;
And here had fall'n a great part of a tower, 30
Whole, like a crag that tumbles from the cliff,
And like a crag was gay with wilding flowers:
And high above a piece of turret stair,
Worn by the feet that now were silent, wound
Bare to the sun, and monstrous ivy-stems
Claspt the gray walls with hairy-fibred arms,
And suck'd the joining of the stones, and look'd
A knot, beneath, of snakes, aloft, a grove.

And while he waited in the castle court,
The voice of Enid, Yniol's daughter, rang

Clear through the open casement of the hall,
 Singing; and as the sweet voice of a bird,
 Heard by the lander in a lonely isle,
 Moves him to think what kind of bird it is
 That sings so delicately clear, and make
 Conjecture of the plumage and the form,—
 So the sweet voice of Enid moved Geraint;
 And made him like a man abroad at morn
 When first the liquid note beloved of men
 Comes flying over many a windy wave 10
 To Britain, and in April suddenly
 Breaks from a coppice gemm'd with green and red,
 And he suspends his converse with a friend,
 Or it may be the labour of his hands,
 To think or say, "There is the nightingale,"—
 So fared it with Geraint, who thought and said,
 "Here, by God's grace, is the one voice for me."

It chanced the song that Enid sang was one
 Of Fortune and her wheel, and Enid sang:

"Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel and lower the proud; 20
 Turn thy wild wheel through sunshine, storm, and cloud;
 Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.

"Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with smile or frown;
 With that wild wheel we go not up or down;
 Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.

"Smile and we smile, the lords of many lands;
 Frown and we smile, the lords of our own hands;
 For man is man and master of his fate.

"Turn, turn thy wheel above the staring crowd;
 Thy wheel and thou are shadows in the cloud;
 Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate." 30

"Hark, by the bird's song you may learn the nest,"
 Said Yniol; "enter quickly." Entering then,
 Right o'er a mount of newly-fallen stones,
 The dusky-rafter'd many-cobwebb'd hall,
 He found an ancient dame in dim brocade;
 And near her, like a blossom vermeil-white,
 That lightly breaks a faded flower-sheath,
 Moved the fair Enid, all in faded silk,

Her daughter. In a moment thought Geraint,
"Here by God's rood is the one maid for me."
But none spake word except the hoary Earl:
"Enid, the good knight's horse stands in the court;
Take him to stall, and give him corn, and then
Go to the town and buy us flesh and wine;
And we will make us merry as we may.
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great."

He spake: the Prince, as Enid pass'd him, fain
To follow, strode a stride; but Yniol caught 10
His purple scarf, and held, and said, "Forbear!
Rest! the good house, though ruin'd, O my son,
Endures not that her guest should serve himself."
And reverencing the custom of the house,
Geraint, from utter courtesy, forbore.

So Enid took his charger to the stall;
And after went her way across the bridge,
And reach'd the town, and while the Prince and Earl
Yet spoke together, came again with one,
A youth, that following with a costrel bore 20
The means of goodly welcome, flesh and wine.
And Enid brought sweet cakes to make them cheer,
And in her veil enfolded, manchet bread.
And then, because their hall must also serve
For kitchen, boil'd the flesh, and spread the board,
And stood behind, and waited on the three.
And seeing her so sweet and serviceable,
Geraint had longing in him evermore
To stoop and kiss the tender little thumb,
That crost the trencher as she laid it down: 30
But after all had eaten, then Geraint,
For now the wine made summer in his veins,
Let his eye rove in following, or rest
On Enid at her lowly handmaid-work,
Now here, now there, about the dusky hall;
Then suddenly address the hoary Earl:

"Fair Host and Earl, I pray your courtesy;
This sparrow-hawk, what is he? tell me of him.
His name? but no, good faith, I will not have it:

For if he be the knight whom late I saw
 Ride into that new fortress by your town,
 White from the mason's hand, then have I sworn
 From his own lips to have it—I am Geraint
 Of Devon—for this morning when the Queen
 Sent her own maiden to demand the name,
 His dwarf, a vicious under-shapen thing,
 Struck at her with his whip, and she return'd
 Indignant to the Queen; and then I swore
 That I would track this caitiff to his hold, 10
 And fight and break his pride, and have it of him.
 And all unarm'd I rode, and thought to find
 Arms in your town, where all the men are mad;
 They take the rustic murmur of their bourg
 For the great wave that echoes round the world;
 They would not hear me speak: but if you know
 Where I can light on arms, or if yourself
 Should have them, tell me, seeing I have sworn
 That I will break his pride and learn his name,
 Avenging this great insult done the Queen." 20

Then cried Earl Yniol, "Art thou he indeed,
 Geraint, a name far sounded among men
 For noble deeds? and truly I, when first
 I saw you moving by me on the bridge,
 Felt you were somewhat, yea and by your state
 And presence might have guess'd you one of those
 That eat in Arthur's hall at Camelot.
 Nor speak I now from foolish flattery;
 For this dear child hath often heard me praise
 Your feats of arms, and often when I paused 30
 Hath ask'd again, and ever loved to hear;
 So grateful is the noise of noble deeds
 To noble hearts who see but acts of wrong:
 Oh, never yet had woman such a pair
 Of suitors as this maiden; first Limours,
 A creature wholly given to brawls and wine,
 Drunk even when he woo'd; and be he dead
 I know not, but he pass'd to the wild land.
 The second was your foe, the sparrow-hawk,
 My curse, my nephew—I will not let his name
 Slip from my lips if I can help it—he, 40

When I that knew him fierce and turbulent
Refused her to him, then his pride awoke;
And since the proud man often is the mean,
He sow'd a slander in the common ear,
Affirming that his father left him gold,
And in my charge, which was not render'd to him;
Brib'd with large promises the men who serv'd
About my person, the more easily
Because my means were somewhat broken into
Through open doors and hospitality; 10
Rais'd my own town against me in the night
Before my Enid's birthday, sack'd my house;
From mine own earldom foully ousted me;
Built that new fort to overawe my friends,
For truly there are those who love me yet;
And keeps me in this ruinous castle here,
Where doubtless he would put me soon to death,
But that his pride too much despises me:
And I myself sometimes despise myself;
For I have let men be, and have their way; 20
Am much too gentle, have not used my power:
Nor know I whether I be very base
Or very manful, whether very wise
Or very foolish; only this I know,
That whatsoever evil happen to me,
I seem to suffer nothing heart or limb,
But can endure it all most patiently."

"Well said, true heart," replied Geraint, "but arms,
That if, as I suppose, your nephew fights
In next day's tourney I may break his pride." 30

And Yniol answer'd, "Arms, indeed, but old
And rusty, old and rusty, Prince Geraint,
Are mine, and therefore at your asking, yours.
But in this tournament can no man tilt,
Except the lady he loves best be there.
Two forks are fix'd into the meadow ground,
And over these is laid a silver wand,
And over that is placed a sparrow-hawk,
The prize of beauty for the fairest there.
And this, what knight soever be in field 40

Lays claim to for the lady at his side,
And tilts with my good nephew thereupon,
Who being apt at arms and big of bone
Has ever won it for the lady with him,
And toppling over all antagonism
Has earn'd himself the name of sparrow-hawk.
But you, that have no lady, cannot fight."

To whom Geraint with eyes all bright replied,
Leaning a little toward him, "Your leave!
Let *me* lay lance in rest, O noble host,
For this dear child, because I never saw,
Though having seen all beauties of our time,
Nor can see elsewhere, anything so fair.
And if I fall her name will yet remain
Untarnish'd as before; but if I live,
So aid me Heaven when at mine uttermost,
As I will make her truly my true wife."

10

Then, howsoever patient, Yniol's heart
Danced in his bosom, seeing better days.
And looking round he saw not Enid there
(Who hearing her own name had slipt away),
But that old dame, to whom full tenderly
And fondling all her hand in his he said,
"Mother, a maiden is a tender thing,
And best by her that bore her understood.
Go thou to rest, but ere thou go to rest
Tell her, and prove her heart toward the Prince."

20

So spake the kindly-hearted Earl, and she
With frequent smile and nod departing found,
Half disarray'd as to her rest, the girl;
Whom first she kiss'd on either cheek, and then
On either shining shoulder laid a hand,
And kept her off and gazed upon her face,
And told her all their converse in the hall,
Proving her heart: but never light and shade
Cours'd one another more on open ground
Beneath a troubled heaven, than red and pale
Across the face of Enid hearing her;
While slowly falling as a scale that falls,

30

When weight is added only grain by grain,
 Sank her sweet head upon her gentle breast;
 Nor did she lift an eye nor speak a word,
 Rapt in the fear and in the wonder of it;
 So moving without answer to her rest
 She found no rest, and ever fail'd to draw
 The quiet night into her blood, but lay
 Contemplating her own unworthiness;
 And when the pale and bloodless east began
 To quicken to the sun, arose, and raised
 Her mother too, and hand in hand they moved
 Down to the meadow where the jousts were held,
 And waited there for Yniol and Geraint.

10

And thither came the twain, and when Geraint
 Beheld her first in field, awaiting him,
 He felt, were she the prize of bodily force,
 Himself beyond the rest pushing could move
 The chair of Idris. Yniol's rusted arms
 Were on his princely person, but through these
 Princelike his bearing shone; and errant knights
 And ladies came, and by-and-by the town
 Flow'd in, and settling circled all the lists.
 And there they fix'd the forks into the ground,
 And over these they placed a silver wand,
 And over that a golden sparrow-hawk.
 Then Yniol's nephew, after trumpet blown,
 Spake to the lady with him and proclaim'd,
 "Advance and take as fairest of the fair,
 For I these two years past have won it for thee,
 The prize of beauty." Loudly spake the Prince,
 "Forbear; there is a worthier," and the knight,
 With some surprise and thrice as much disdain,
 Turn'd, and beheld the four, and all his face
 Glow'd like the heart of a great fire at Yule,
 So burnt he was with passion, crying out,
 "Do battle for it then," no more; and thrice
 They clash'd together, and thrice they brake their
 spears.

20

30

Then each, dishorsed and drawing, lash'd at each
 So often and with such blows that all the crowd
 Wonder'd, and now and then from distant walls

40

There came a clapping as of phantom hands.
So twice they fought, and twice they breathed, and
still

The dew of their great labour, and the blood
Of their strong bodies, flowing, drain'd their force.
But either's force was match'd till Yniol's cry,
"Remember that great insult done the Queen,"
Increased Geraint's, who heaved his blade aloft,
And crack'd the helmet through, and bit the bone,
And fell'd him, and set foot upon his breast,
And said, "Thy name?" To whom the fallen man 10
Made answer, groaning, "Edyrn, son of Nudd!
Ashamed am I that I should tell it thee.
My pride is broken: men have seen my fall."
"Then, Edyrn, son of Nudd," replied Geraint,
"These two things shalt thou do, or else thou diest.
First, thou thyself, thy lady, and thy dwarf,
Shalt ride to Arthur's court, and being there,
Crave pardon for that insult done the Queen,
And shalt abide her judgment on it: next.
Thou shalt give back their earldom to thy kin. 20
These two things shalt thou do, or thou shalt die."
And Edyrn answer'd, "These things will I do,
For I have never yet been overthrown,
And thou hast overthrown me, and my pride
Is broken down, for Enid sees my fall!"
And rising up, he rode to Arthur's court,
And there the Queen forgave him easily.
And being young, he changed himself, and grew
To hate the sin that seem'd so like his own
Of Modred, Arthur's nephew, and fell at last 30
In the great battle fighting for the King.

But when the third day from the hunting-morn
Made a low splendour in the world, and wings
Moved in her ivy, Enid, for she lay
With her fair head in the dim yellow light,
Among the dancing shadows of the birds,
Woke and bethought her of her promise given
No later than last eve to Prince Geraint—
So bent he seem'd on going the third day,
He would not leave her, till her promise given— 40

To ride with him this morning to the court,
And there be made known to the stately Queen,
And there be wedded with all ceremony.
At this she cast her eyes upon her dress,
And thought it never yet had look'd so mean.
For as a leaf in mid-November is
To what it was in mid-October, seem'd
The dress that now she look'd on to the dress
She look'd on ere the coming of Geraint.
And still she look'd, and still the terror grew 10
Of that strange bright and dreadful thing, a court,
All staring at her in her faded silk;
And softly to her own sweet heart she said:

“This noble prince who won our earldom back,
So splendid in his acts and his attire,
Sweet heaven, how much I shall discredit him!
Would he could tarry with us here awhile,
But being so beholden to the Prince,
It were but little grace in any of us,
Bent as he seem'd on going this third day, 20
To seek a second favour at his hands.
Yet if he could but tarry a day or two,
Myself would work eye dim, and finger lame,
Far liefer than so much discredit him.”

And Enid fell in longing for a dress
All branch'd and flower'd with gold, a costly gift
Of her good mother, given her on the night
Before her birthday, three sad years ago,
That night of fire, when Edyrn sack'd their house,
And scatter'd all they had to all the winds: 30
For while the mother show'd it, and the two
Were turning and admiring it, the work
To both appear'd so costly, rose a cry
That Edyrn's men were on them, and they fled
With little save the jewels they had on,
Which being sold and sold had bought them bread:
And Edyrn's men had caught them in their flight,
And placed them in this ruin; and she wish'd
The Prince had found her in her ancient home;
Then let her fancy flit across the past, 40

And roam the goodly places that she knew;
And last bethought her how she used to watch,
Near that old home, a pool of golden carp;
And one was patch'd and blurr'd and lustreless
Among his burnish'd brethren of the pool;
And half asleep she made comparison
Of that and these to her own faded self
And the gay court, and fell asleep again;
And dreamt herself was such a faded form
Among her burnish'd sisters of the pool; 10
But this was in the garden of a king;
And though she lay dark in the pool, she knew
That all was bright; that all about were birds
Of sunny plume in gilded trellis-work;
That all the turf was rich in plots that look'd
Each like a garnet or a turkis in it;
And lords and ladies of the high court went
In silver tissue talking things of state;
And children of the King in cloth of gold
Glanced at the doors or gamboll'd down the walks; 20
And while she thought, "They will not see me,"
came

A stately queen whose name was Guinevere,
And all the children in their cloth of gold
Ran to her, crying, "If we have fish at all
Let them be gold; and charge the gardeners now
To pick the faded creature from the pool,
And cast it on the mixen that it die."
And therewithal one came and seized on her
And Enid started waking, with her heart
All overshadow'd by the foolish dream, 30
And lo! it was her mother grasping her
To get her well awake; and in her hand
A suit of bright apparel, which she laid
Flat on the couch, and spoke exultingly:

"See here, my child, how fresh the colours look,
How fast they hold like colours of a shell
That keeps the wear and polish of the wave!
Why not? It never yet was worn, I trow:
Look on it, child, and tell me if you know it."

And Enid look'd, but all confus'd at first,
Could scarce divide it from her foolish dream;
Then suddenly she knew it and rejoiced,
And answer'd, "Yea, I know it; your good gift,
So sadly lost on that unhappy night;
Your own good gift!" "Yea, surely," said the dame,
"And gladly given again this happy morn.
For when the jousts were ended yesterday,
Went Yniol through the town, and everywhere
He found the sack and plunder of our house 10
All scatter'd through the houses of the town;
And gave command that all which once was ours
Should now be ours again: and yester-eve,
While you were talking sweetly with your Prince,
Came one with this and laid it in my hand,
For love or fear, or seeking favour of us,
Because we have our earldom back again.
And yester-eve I would not tell you of it,
But kept it for a sweet surprise at morn.
Yea, truly is it not a sweet surprise? 20
For I myself unwillingly have worn
My faded suit, as you, my child, have yours,
And howsoever patient, Yniol his.
Ah, dear, he took me from a goodly house,
With store of rich apparel, sumptuous fare,
And page, and maid, and squire, and seneschal,
And pastime both of hawk and hound, and all
That appertains to noble maintenance.
Yea, and he brought me to a goodly house;
But since our fortune slipt from sun to shade, 30
And all through that young traitor, cruel need
Constrain'd us, but a better time has come;
So clothe yourself in this, that better fits
Our mended fortunes and a Prince's bride:
For though you won the prize of fairest fair,
And though I heard him call you fairest fair,
Let never maiden think, however fair,
She is not fairer in new clothes than old.
And should some great court-lady say, the Prince
Hath pick'd a ragged-robin from the hedge, 40
And like a madman brought her to the court,

Then were you shamed, and, worse, might shame the
Prince

To whom we are beholden; but I know,
When my dear child is set forth at her best,
That neither court nor country, though they sought
Through all the provinces like those of old
That lighted on Queen Esther, has her match."

Here ceased the kindly mother out of breath;
And Enid listen'd brightening as she lay;
Then, as the white and glittering star of morn
Parts from a bank of snow, and by-and-by 10
Slips into golden cloud, the maiden rose,
And left her maiden couch, and robed herself,
Help'd by the mother's careful hand and eye,
Without a mirror, in the gorgeous gown;
Who, after, turn'd her daughter round, and said
She never yet had seen her half so fair;
And call'd her like that maiden in the tale,
Whom Gwydion made by glamour out of flowers,
And sweeter than the bride of Cassivelaun, 20
Flur, for whose love the Roman Cæsar first
Invaded Britain, "But we beat him back,
As this great Prince invaded us, and we,
Not beat him back, but welcomed him with joy.
And I can scarcely ride with you to court,
For old am I, and rough the ways and wild;
But Yniol goes, and I full oft shall dream
'I see my princess as I see her now,
Clothed with my gift, and gay among the gay."

But while the women thus rejoiced, Geraint
Woke where he slept in the high hall, and call'd 30
For Enid; and when Yniol made report
Of that good mother making Enid gay
In such apparel as might well beseem
His princess, or indeed the stately Queen,
He answer'd: "Earl, entreat her by my love,
Albeit I give no reason but my wish,
That she ride with me in her faded silk."
Yniol with that hard message went; it fell
Like flaws in summer laying lusty corn:

For Enid, all abash'd she knew not why,
Dared not to glance at her good mother's face,
But silently, in all obedience,
Her mother silent too, nor helping her,
Laid from her limbs the costly-broider'd gift,
And robed them in her ancient suit again,
And so descended. Never man rejoiced
More than Geraint to greet her thus attired;
And glancing all at once as keenly at her
As careful robins eye the delver's toil, 10
Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall,
But rested with her sweet face satisfied;
Then seeing cloud upon the mother's brow,
Her by both hands he caught, and sweetly said:

“O my new mother, be not wroth or grieved
At your new son, for my petition to her.
When late I left Caerleon, our great Queen,
In words whose echo lasts, they were so sweet,
Made promise, that whatever bride I brought,
Herself would clothe her like the sun in Heaven. 20
Thereafter, when I reach'd this ruin'd hold,
Beholding one so bright in dark estate,
I vow'd that could I gain her, our kind Queen,
No hand but hers, should make your Enid burst
Sunlike from cloud—and likewise thought, perhaps,
That service done so graciously would bind
The two together; for I wish the two
To love each other: how should Enid find
A nobler friend? Another thought I had;
I came among you here so suddenly, 30
That though her gentle presence at the lists
Might well have served for proof that I was loved,
I doubted whether filial tenderness,
Or easy nature, did not let itself
Be moulded by your wishes for her weal;
Or whether some false sense in her own self
Of my contrasting brightness, overbore
Her fancy dwelling in this dusky hall;
And such a sense might make her long for court
And all its dangerous glories: and I thought, 40
That could I someway prove such force in her

Link'd with such love for me, that at a word
(No reason given her) she could cast aside
A splendour dear to women, new to her,
And therefore dearer; or if not so new,
Yet therefore tenfold dearer by the power
Of intermitted custom; then I felt
That I could rest, a rock in ebbs and flows,
Fix'd on her faith. Now, therefore, I do rest,
A prophet certain of my prophecy,
That never shadow of mistrust can cross
Between us. Grant me pardon for my thoughts;
And for my strange petition I will make
Amends hereafter by some gaudy-day,
When your fair child shall wear your costly gift
Beside your own warm hearth, with, on her knees,
Who knows? another gift of the high God,
Which, maybe, shall have learn'd to lisp you thanks."

10

He spoke: the mother smil'd, but half in tears,
Then brought a mantle down and wrapt her in it,
And claspt and kiss'd her, and they rode away.

20

Now thrice that morning Guinevere had climb'd
The giant tower, from whose high crest, they say,
Men saw the goodly hills of Somerset,
And white sails flying on the yellow sea;
But not to goodly hill or yellow sea
Look'd the fair Queen, but up the vale of Usk,
By the flat meadow, till she saw them come;
And then descending met them at the gates,
Embrac'd her with all welcome as a friend,
And did her honour as the Prince's bride,
And cloth'd her for her bridals like the sun;
And all that week was old Caerleon gay,
For by the hands of Dubric, the high saint,
They twain were wedded with all ceremony.

30

And this was on the last year's Whitsuntide.
But Enid ever kept the faded silk,
Remembering how first he came on her,
Drest in that dress, and how he loved her in it,
And all her foolish fears about the dress,

And all his journey toward her, as himself
Had told her, and their coming to the court.

And now this morning when he said to her,
"Put on your worst and meanest dress," she found
And took it, and array'd herself therein.

GERAINT AND ENID

O purblind race of miserable men,
How many among us at this very hour
Do forge a life-long trouble for ourselves,
By taking true for false, or false for true;
Here, through the feeble twilight of this world 10
Groping, how many, until we pass and reach
That other, where we see as we are seen!

So fared it with Geraint, who issuing forth
That morning, when they both had got to horse,
Perhaps because he loved her passionately,
And felt that tempest brooding round his heart,
Which, if he spoke at all, would break perforce
Upon a head so dear in thunder, said:
"Not at my side. I charge you ride before, 20
Ever a good way on before; and this
I charge you, on your duty as a wife,
Whatever happens, not to speak to me,
No, not a word!" and Enid was aghast;
And forth they rode, but scarce three paces on,
When crying out, "Effeminate as I am,
I will not fight my way with gilded arms,
All shall be iron;" he loosed a mighty purse,
Hung at his belt, and hurl'd it toward the squire.
So the last sight that Enid had of home 30
Was all the marble threshold flashing, strown
With gold and scatter'd coinage, and the squire
Chafing his shoulder: then he cried again,
"To the wilds!" and Enid leading down the tracks
Through which he bade her lead him on, they pass'd
The marches, and by bandit-haunted holds,
Gray swamps and pools, waste places of the hern,
And wildernesses, perilous paths, they rode:

Round was their pace at first, but slacken'd soon:
A stranger meeting them had surely thought,
They rode so slowly and they look'd so pale,
That each had suffer'd some exceeding wrong.
For he was ever saying to himself,
"O I that wasted time to tend upon her,
To compass her with sweet observances,
To dress her beautifully and keep her true—"

And there he broke the sentence in his heart
Abruptly, as a man upon his tongue 10
May break it, when his passion masters him.
And she was ever praying the sweet heavens
To save her dear lord whole from any wound.
And ever in her mind she cast about
For that unnoticed failing in herself,
Which made him look so cloudy and so cold;
Till the great plover's human whistle amazed
Her heart, and glancing round the waste she fear'd
In every wavering brake an ambuscade.
Then thought again, "If there be such in me, 20
I might amend it by the grace of Heaven,
If he would only speak and tell me of it."

But when the fourth part of the day was gone,
Then Enid was aware of three tall knights
On horseback, wholly arm'd, behind a rock
In shadow, waiting for them, caitiffs all;
And heard one crying to his fellow, "Look,
Here comes a laggard hanging down his head,
Who seems no bolder than a beaten hound;
Come, we will slay him and will have his horse 30
And armour, and his damsel shall be ours."

Then Enid ponder'd in her heart, and said:
"I will go back a little to my lord,
And I will tell him all their caitiff talk;
For, be he wroth even to slaying me,
Far liefer by his dear hand had I die,
Than that my lord should suffer loss or shame."

Then she went back some paces of return,
Met his full frown timidly firm, and said:

"My lord, I saw three bandits by the rock
Waiting to fall on you, and heard them boast
That they would slay you, and possess your horse
And armour, and your damsel should be theirs."

He made a wrathful answer: "Did I wish
Your silence or your warning? one command
I laid upon you, not to speak to me,
And thus you keep it! Well then, look—for now,
Whether you wish me victory or defeat,
Long for my life, or hunger for my death,
Yourself shall see my vigour is not lost." 10

Then Enid waited pale and sorrowful,
And down upon him bare the bandit three.
And at the midmost charging, Prince Geraint
Drave the long spear a cubit through his breast
And out beyond; and then against his brace
Of comrades, each of whom had broken on him
A lance that splinter'd like an icicle,
Swung from his brand a windy buffet out
Once, twice, to right, to left, and stunn'd the twain 20
Or slew them, and dismounting like a man
That skins the wild beast after slaying him,
Stript from the three dead wolves of woman born
The three gay suits of armour which they wore,
And let the bodies lie, but bound the suits
Of armour on their horses, each on each,
And tied the bridle-reins of all the three
Together, and said to her, "Drive them on
Before you;" and she drove them through the waste.

He followed nearer: ruth began to work 30
Against his anger in him, while he watch'd
The being he loved best in all the world,
With difficulty in mild obedience
Driving them on: he fain had spoken to her,
And loosed in words of sudden fire the wrath
And smoulder'd wrong that burnt him all within:
But evermore it seem'd an easier thing
At once without remorse to strike her dead,
Than to cry "Halt," and to her own bright face

Accuse her of the least immodesty.

And thus tongue-tied, it made him wroth the more
That she *could* speak when his own ear had heard
Call herself false; and suffering thus he made
Minutes an age: but in scarce longer time
Than at Caerleon the full-tided Usk,
Before he turn to fall seaward again,
Pauses, did Enid, keeping watch, behold
In the first shallow shade of a deep wood,
Before a gloom of stubborn-shafted oaks,
Three other horsemen waiting, wholly arm'd,
Whereof one seem'd far larger than her lord.
And shook her pulses, crying, "Look, a prize!
Three horses and three goodly suits of arms,
And all in charge of whom? a girl: set on."
"Nay," said the second, "yonder comes a knight."
The third, "A craven; how he hangs his head!"
The giant answer'd merrily, "Yea, but one?
Wait here, and when he passes fall upon him."

10

And Enid ponder'd in her heart and said,
"I will abide the coming of my lord,
And I will tell him all their villainy.
My lord is weary with the fight before,
And they will fall upon him unawares.
I needs must disobey him for his good;
How should I dare obey him to his harm?
Needs must I speak, and though he kill me for it.
I save a life dearer to me than mine."

20

And she abode his coming, and said to him
With timid firmness, "Have I leave to speak?"
He said, "You take it, speaking," and she spoke.

30

"There lurk three villains yonder in the wood,
And each of them is wholly arm'd, and one
Is larger-limb'd than you are, and they say
That they will fall upon you while you pass."

To which he flung a wrathful answer back:
"And if there were an hundred in the wood,

And every man were larger-limb'd than I,
And all at once should sally out upon me,
I swear it would not ruffle me so much
As you that not obey me. Stand aside,
And if I fall, cleave to the better man."

And Enid stood aside to wait the event,
Not dare to watch the combat, only breathe
Short fits of prayer, at every stroke a breath.
And he she dreaded most bare down upon him.
Aim'd at the helm, his lance err'd; but Geraint's, 10
A little in the late encounter strain'd,
Struck through the bulky bandit's corselet home,
And then brake short, and down his enemy roll'd,
And there lay still; as he that tells the tale
Saw once a great piece of a promontory,
That had a sapling growing on it, slip
From the long shore-cliff's windy walls to the beach,
And there lie still, and yet the sapling grew:
So lay the man transfix'd. His craven pair 20
Of comrades making slower at the Prince,
When now they saw their bulwark fallen, stood;
On whom the victor, to confound them more,
Spurr'd with his terrible war-cry; for as one,
That listens near a torrent mountain-brook,
All through the crash of the near cataract hears
The drumming thunder of the huger fall
At distance, were the soldiers wont to hear
His voice in battle, and be kindled by it,
And foemen scared, like that false pair who turn'd 30
Flying, but, overtaken, died the death
Themselves had wrought on many an innocent.

Thereon Geraint, dismounting, pick'd the lance
That pleased him best, and drew from those dead
wolves

Their three gay suits of armour, each from each,
And bound them on their horses, each on each,
And tied the bridle-reins of all the three
Together, and said to her, "Drive them on
Before you," and she drove them through the wood.

He follow'd nearer still : the pain she had
To keep them in the wild ways of the wood,
Two sets of three laden with jingling arms,
Together, served a little to disedge
The sharpness of that pain about her heart ;
And they themselves, like creatures gently born
But into bad hands fall'n, and now so long
By bandits groom'd, prick'd their light ears, and felt
Her low firm voice and tender government.

So through the green gloom of the wood they 10
pass'd,
And issuing under open heavens beheld
A little town with towers, upon a rock,
And close beneath, a meadow gemlike chased
In the brown wild, and mowers mowing in it :
And down a rocky pathway from the place
There came a fair-hair'd youth, that in his hand
Bare victual for the mowers : and Geraint
Had ruth again on Enid looking pale :
Then, moving downward to the meadow ground,
He, when the fair-hair'd youth came by him, said, 20
"Friend, let her eat ; the damsel is so faint."
"Yea, willingly," replied the youth ; "and you,
My lord, eat also, though the fare is coarse,
And only meet for mowers ;" then set down
His basket, and dismounting on the sward
They let the horses graze, and ate themselves.
And Enid took a little delicately,
Less having stomach for it than desire
To close with her lord's pleasure ; but Geraint
Ate all the mowers' victual unawares, 30

And when he found all empty, was amazed ;
And "Boy," said he, "I have eaten all, but take
A horse and arms for guerdon ; choose the best."
He, reddening in extremity of delight,
"My lord, you overpay me fiftyfold."
"Ye will be all the wealthier," cried the Prince.
"I take it as free gift, then," said the boy,
"Not guerdon ; for myself can easily,
While your good damsel rests, return, and fetch

Fresh victual for these mowers of our Earl;
For these are his, and all the field is his,
And I myself am his; and I will tell him
How great a man you are: he loves to know
When men of mark are in his territory;
And he will have you to his palace here,
And serve you costlier than with mowers' fare."

Then said Geraint, "I wish no better fare:
I never ate with angrier appetite
Than when I left your mowers dinnerless.
And into no Earl's palace will I go.
I know, God knows, too much of palaces!
And if he want me, let him come to me.
But hire us some fair chamber for the night,
And stalling for the horses, and return
With victual for these men, and let us know."

10

"Yea, my kind lord," said the glad youth, and went,
Held his head high, and thought himself a knight,
And up the rocky pathway disappear'd,
Leading the horse, and they were left alone.

20

But when the Prince had brought his errant eyes
Home from the rock, sideways he let them glance
At Enid, where she droopt: his own false doom,
That shadow of mistrust should never cross
Betwixt them, came upon him, and he sigh'd;
Then with another humorous ruth remark'd
The lusty mowers labouring dinnerless,
And watch'd the sun blaze on the turning scythe,
And after nodded sleepily in the heat.
But she, remembering her old ruin'd hall,
And all the windy clamour of the daws
About her hollow turret, pluck'd the grass
There growing longest by the meadow's edge,
And into many a listless annulet,
Now over, now beneath her marriage ring,
Wove and unwove it, till the boy return'd
And told them of a chamber, and they went;
Where, after saying to her, "If you will,
Call for the woman of the house," to which

30

She answer'd, "Thanks, my lord;" the two remain'd
 Apart by all the chamber's width, and mute
 As creatures voiceless through the fault of birth,
 Or two wild men supporters of a shield,
 Painted, who stare at open space, nor glance
 The one at other, parted by the shield.

On a sudden, many a voice along the street,
 And heel against the pavement echoing, burst
 Their drowse; and either started while the door,
 Push'd from without, drave backward to the wall, 10
 And midmost of a rout of roisterers,
 Femininely fair and dissolutely pale,
 Her suitor in old years before Geraint,
 Enter'd, the wild lord of the place, Limours.
 He moving up with pliant courtliness,
 Greeted Geraint full face, but stealthily,
 In the mid-warmth of welcome and graspt hand,
 Found Enid with the corner of his eye,
 And knew her sitting sad and solitary.
 Then cried Geraint for wine and goodly cheer 20
 To feed the sudden guest, and sumptuously
 According to his fashion, bade the host
 Call in what men soever were his friends,
 And feast with these in honour of their Earl;
 "And care not for the cost; the cost is mine."

And wine and food were brought, and Earl
 Limours
 Drank till he jested with all ease, and told
 Free tales, and took the word and play'd upon it,
 And made it of two colours; for his talk,
 When wine and free companions kindled him, 30
 Was wont to glance and sparkle like a gem
 Of fifty facets; thus he moved the Prince
 To laughter and his comrades to applause.
 Then, when the Prince was merry, ask'd Limours,
 "Your leave, my lord, to cross the room, and speak
 To your good damsel there who sits apart,
 And seems so lonely?" "My free leave," he said;
 "Get her to speak: she does not speak to me."
 Then rose Limours, and looking at his feet,

Like him who tries the bridge he fears may fail,
 Crost and came near, lifted adoring eyes,
 Bow'd at her side and utter'd whisperingly:

“Enid, the pilot star of my lone life,
 Enid, my early and my only love,
 Enid, the loss of whom has turn'd me wild—
 What chance is this? how is it I see you here?
 Ye are in my power at last, are in my power.
 Yet fear me not: I call mine own self wild,
 But keep a touch of sweet civility . 10
 Here in the heart of waste and wilderness.
 I thought, but that your father came between,
 In former days you saw me favourably.
 And if it were so, do not keep it back:
 Make me a little happier: let me know it:
 Owe you me nothing for a life half lost?
 Yea, yea, the whole dear debt of all you are.
 And, Enid, you and he, I see it with joy,
 You sit apart, you do not speak to him,
 You come with no attendance, page or maid, 20
 To serve you—does he love you as of old?
 For, call it lovers' quarrels, yet I know
 Though men may bicker with the things they love,
 They would not make them laughable in all eyes,
 Not while they loved them; and your wretched
 dress,

A wretched insult on you, dumbly speaks
 Your story, that this man love you no more.
 Your beauty is no beauty to him now:
 A common chance—right well I know it—pall'd— 30
 For I know men: nor will you win him back,
 For the man's love once gone never returns.
 But here is one who loves you as of old;
 With more exceeding passion than of old:
 Good, speak the word: my followers ring him round:
 He sits unarm'd; I hold a finger up;
 They understand: no; I do not mean blood:
 Nor need you look so scared at what I say:
 My malice is no deeper than a moat,
 No stronger than a wall: there is the keep;
 He shall not cross us more; speak but the word: 40

Or speak it not ; but then by Him that made me
The one true lover which you ever had,
I will make use of all the power I have.
O pardon me ! the madness of that hour,
When first I parted from you, moves me yet."

At this the tender sound of his own voice
And sweet self-pity, or the fancy of it,
Made his eye moist ; but Enid fear'd his eyes,
Moist as they were, wine-heated from the feast ;
And answer'd with such craft as women use, 10
Guilty or guiltless, to stave off a chance
That breaks upon them perilously, and said :

"Earl, if you love me as in former years,
And do not practise on me, come with morn,
And snatch me from him as by violence ;
Leave me to-night : I am weary to the death."

Low at leave-taking, with his brandish'd plume
Brushing his instep, bow'd the all-amorous Earl,
And the stout Prince bade him a loud good-night.
He moving homeward babbled to his men, 20
How Enid never lov'd a man but him,
Nor car'd a broken egg-shell for her lord.

But Enid left alone with Prince Geraint,
Debating his command of silence given,
And that she now perforce must violate it,
Held commune with herself, and while she held
He fell asleep, and Enid had no heart
To wake him, but hung o'er him, wholly pleas'd
To find him yet unwounded after fight,
And hear him breathing low and equally. 30
Anon she rose, and stepping lightly, heap'd
The pieces of his armour in one place,
All to be there against a sudden need ;
Then dozed awhile herself, but overtoil'd
By that day's grief and travel, evermore
Seem'd catching at a rootless thorn, and then
Went slipping down horrible precipices,
And strongly striking out her limbs awoke ;

Then thought she heard the wild Earl at the door,
With all his rout of random followers,
Sound on a dreadful trumpet summoning her;
Which was the red cock shouting to the light,
As the gray dawn stole o'er the dewy world,
And glimmer'd on his armour in the room.
And once again she rose to look at it,
But touch'd it unawares: jangling, the casque
Fell, and he started up and star'd at her.
Then breaking his command of silence given, 10
She told him all that Earl Limours had said,
Except the passage that he lov'd her not;
Nor left untold the craft herself had used;
But ended with apology so sweet,
Low-spoken, and of so few words, and seem'd
So justified by that necessity,
That though he thought "was it for him she wept
In Devon?" he but gave a wrathful groan,
Saying, "Your sweet faces make good fellows fools
And traitors. Call the host, and bid him bring 20
Charger and palfrey." So she glided out
Among the heavy breathings of the house,
And like a household Spirit at the walls
Beat, till she woke the sleepers, and return'd;
Then tending her rough lord, though all unask'd,
In silence, did him service as a squire;
Till issuing arm'd he found the host and cried,
"Thy reckoning, friend?" and ere he learnt it, "Take
Five horses and their armours;" and the host 30
Suddenly honest, answer'd in amaze,
"My lord, I scarce have spent the worth of one!"
"You will be all the wealthier," said the Prince;
And then to Enid, "Forward! and to-day
I charge you, Enid, more especially,
What thing soever you may hear, or see,
Or fancy (though I count it of small use
To charge you), that you speak not but obey."

And Enid answer'd, "Yea, my lord, I know
Your wish, and would obey; but riding first,
I hear the violent threats you do not hear,
I see the danger which you cannot see:

Then not to give you warning, that seems hard—
Almost beyond me; yet I would obey."

"Yea, so," said he, "do it: be not too wise;
Seeing that you are wedded to a man,
Not quite mismated with a yawning clown,
But one with arms to guard his head and yours,
With eyes to find you out however far,
And ears to hear you even in his dreams."

With that he turn'd and look'd as keenly at her
As careful robins eye the delver's toil; 10
And that within her, which a wanton fool
Or hasty judger would have call'd her guilt,
Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall.
And Geraint look'd, and was not satisfied.

Then forward by a way which, beaten broad,
Led from the territory of false Limours
To the waste earldom of another earl,
Doorm, whom his shaking vassals call'd the Bull,
Went Enid with her sullen follower on.
Once she look'd back, and when she saw him ride 20
More near by many a rood than yestermorn,
It well-nigh made her cheerful; till Geraint
Waving an angry hand as who should say,
"You watch me," sadden'd all her heart again.
But while the sun yet beat a dewy blade,
The sound of many a heavily-galloping hoof
Smote on her ear, and turning round she saw
Dust, and the points of lances bicker in it.
Then not to disobey her lord's behest,
And yet to give him warning, for he rode 30
As if he heard not, moving back she held
Her finger up, and pointed to the dust.
At which the warrior in his obstinacy,
Because she kept the letter of his word,
Was in a manner pleas'd, and turning, stood.
And in the moment after, wild Limours,
Borne on a black horse, like a thunder-cloud
Whose skirts are loosen'd by the breaking storm,
Half ridden off with by the thing he rode,

And all in passion uttering a dry shriek,
Dash'd on Geraint, who closed with him, and bore
Down by the length of lance and arm beyond
The crupper, and so left him stunn'd or dead,
And overthrew the next that follow'd him,
And blindly rush'd on all the rout behind.
But at the flash and motion of the man
They vanish'd panic-stricken, like a shoal
Of darting fish, that on a summer morn
Adown the crystal dikes at Camelot
Come slipping o'er their shadows on the sand,
But if a man who stands upon the brink
But lift a shining hand against the sun,
There is not left the twinkle of a fin
Betwixt the cressy islets white in flower;
So, scar'd but at the motion of the man,
Fled all the boon companions of the Earl,
And left him lying in the public way:
So vanish friendships only made in wine.

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Then like a stormy sunlight smil'd Geraint;
Who saw the chargers of the two that fell
Start from their fallen lords, and wildly fly,
Mix'd with the flyers. "Horse and man," he said,
"All of one mind and all right honest friends!
Not a hoof left: and I methinks till now
Was honest—paid with horses and with arms.
I cannot steal or plunder, no nor beg;
And so what say you—shall we strip him there
Your lover? has your palfrey heart enough
To bear his armour? shall we fast, or dine?
No?—then do you, being right honest, pray
That we may meet the horsemen of Earl Doorm;
I too would still be honest." Thus he said;
And sadly gazing on her bridle-reins,
And answering not one word, she led the way.

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But as a man to whom a dreadful loss
Falls in a far land and he knows it not,
But coming back he learns it, and the loss
So pains him that he sickens nigh to death;
So fared it with Geraint, who being prick'd

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In combat with the follower of Limours,
Bled underneath his armour secretly,
And so rode on, nor told his gentle wife
What ail'd him, hardly knowing it himself,
Till his eye darken'd and his helmet wagg'd
And at a sudden swerving of the road,
Though happily down on a bank of grass,
The Prince, without a word, from his horse fell.

And Enid heard the clashing of his fall,
Suddenly came, and at his side all pale
Dismounting, loosed the fastenings of his arms,
Nor let her true hand falter, nor blue eye
Moisten, till she had lighted on his wound,
And tearing off her veil of faded silk
Had bar'd her forehead to the blistering sun,
And swath'd the hurt that drain'd her dear lord's
life.

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Then after all was done that hand could do,
She rested, and her desolation came
Upon her, and she wept beside the way.

And many pass'd, but none regarded her,
For in that realm of lawless turbulence,
A woman weeping for her murder'd mate
Was car'd as much for as a summer shower.
One took him for a victim of Earl Doorm,
Nor dar'd to waste a perilous pity on him:
Another hurrying past, a man-at-arms,
Rode on a mission to the bandit Earl;
Half whistling and half singing a coarse song,
He drove the dust against her veiless eyes:
Another, flying from the wrath of Doorm
Before an ever-fancied arrow, made
The long way smoke beneath him in his fear;
At which her palfrey whinnying lifted heel,
And scour'd into the coppices and was lost,
While the great charger stood, griev'd like a man.

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But at the point of noon the huge Earl Doorm,
Broad-fac'd with under-fringe of russet beard,
Bound on a foray, rolling eyes of prey,

Came riding with a hundred lances up:
But ere he came, like one that hails a ship,
Cried out with a big voice, "What, is he dead?"
"No, no, not dead!" she answer'd in all haste.
"Would some of your kind people take him up,
And bear him hence out of this cruel sun?
Most sure am I, quite sure, he is not dead."

Then said Earl Doorm: "Well, if he be not dead,
Why wail you for him thus? you seem a child.
And be he dead, I count you for a fool;
Your wailing will not quicken him: dead or not,
You mar a comely face with idiot tears.
Yet, since the face *is* comely—some of you,
Here, take him up, and bear him to our hall:
An if he live, we will have him of our band;
And if he die, why, earth has earth enough
To hide him. See ye take the charger too,
A noble one."

He spake, and pass'd away,
But left two brawny spearmen, who advanc'd,
Each growling like a dog, when his good bone
Seems to be pluck'd at by the village boys
Who love to vex him eating, and he fears
To lose his bone, and lays his foot upon it,
Gnawing and growling: so the ruffians growl'd,
Fearing to lose, and all for a dead man,
Their chance of booty from the morning's raid,
Yet rais'd and laid him on a litter-bier,
Such as they brought upon their forays out
For those that might be wounded; laid him on it
All in the hollow of his shield, and took
And bore him to the naked hall of Doorm
(His gentle charger following him unled),
And cast him and the bier in which he lay
Down on an oaken settle in the hall,
And then departed, hot in haste to join
Their luckier mates, but growling as before,
And cursing their lost time, and the dead man,
And their own Earl, and their own souls, and her.
They might as well have blest her: she was deaf
To blessing or to cursing save from one.

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So for long hours sat Enid by her lord,
 There in the naked hall, propping his head,
 And chafing his pale hands, and calling to him.
 And at the last he waken'd from his swoon,
 And found his own dear bride propping his head,
 And chafing his faint hands, and calling to him;
 And felt the warm tears falling on his face;
 And said to his own heart, "She weeps for me:"
 And yet lay still, and feign'd himself as dead,
 That he might prove her to the uttermost, 10
 And say to his own heart, "She weeps for me."

But in the falling afternoon return'd
 The huge Earl Doorm with plunder to the hall.
 His lusty spearmen follow'd him with noise:
 Each hurling down a heap of things that rang
 Against the pavement, cast his lance aside,
 And doff'd his helm: and then there flutter'd in,
 Half bold, half frightened, with dilated eyes.
 A tribe of women, dress'd in many hues,
 And mingled with the spearmen: and Earl Doorm 20
 Struck with a knife's haft hard against the board,
 And call'd for flesh and wine to feed his spears.
 And men brought in whole hogs and quarter beeves,
 And all the hall was dim with steam of flesh:
 And none spake word, but all sat down at once,
 And ate with tumult in the naked hall,
 Feeding like horses when you hear them feed;
 Till Enid shrank far back into herself,
 To shun the wild ways of the lawless tribe.
 But when Earl Doorm had eaten all he would, 30
 He roll'd his eyes about the hall, and found
 A damsel drooping in a corner of it.
 Then he remember'd her, and how she wept;
 And out of her there came a power upon him,
 And rising on the sudden he said, "Eat!
 I never yet beheld a thing so pale.
 God's curse, it makes me mad to see you weep.
 Eat! Look yourself. Good luck had your good
 man,
 For were I dead, who is it would weep for me?
 Sweet lady, never since I first drew breath 40

Have I beheld a lily like yourself.
And so there lived some colour in your cheek,
There is not one among my gentlewomen
Were fit to wear your slipper for a glove.
But listen to me, and by me be ruled,
And I will do the thing I have not done,
For you shall share my earldom with me, girl,
And we will live like two birds in one nest,
And I will fetch you forage from all fields,
For I compel all creatures to my will."

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He spoke; the brawny spearman let his cheek
Bulge with the unswallow'd piece, and turning
star'd;
While some, whose souls the old serpent long had
drawn
Down, as the worm draws in the wither'd leaf
And makes it earth, hiss'd each at other's ear
What shall not be recorded—women they,
Women, or what had been those gracious things,
But now desired the humbling of their best,
Yea, would have help'd him to it: and all at once
They hated her, who took no thought of them,
But answer'd in low voice, her meek head yet
Drooping, "I pray you of your courtesy,
He being as he is, to let me be."

20

She spake so low he hardly heard her speak,
But like a mighty patron, satisfied
With what himself had done so graciously,
Assum'd that she had thank'd him, adding, "Yea,
Eat and be glad, for I account you mine."

She answer'd meekly, "How should I be glad
Henceforth in all the world at anything,
Until my lord arise and look upon me?"

30

Here the huge Earl cried out upon her talk,
As all but empty heart and weariness
And sickly nothing; suddenly seiz'd on her,
And bare her by main violence to the board,
And thrust the dish before her, crying, "Eat."

"No, no," said Enid, vex'd, "I will not eat
Till yonder man upon the bier arise,
And eat with me." "Drink, then," he answer'd.

"Here!"

(And fill'd a horn with wine and held it to her.)
"Lo! I myself, when flush'd with fight, or hot,
God's curse, with anger—often I myself,
Before I well have drunken, scarce can eat:
Drink therefore, and the wine will change your will."

"Not so," she cried, "by Heaven, I will not drink
Till my dear lord arise and bid me do it, 10
And drink with me; and if he rise no more,
I will not look at wine until I die."

At this he turn'd all red and pac'd his hall,
Now gnaw'd his under, now his upper lip,
And coming up close to her, said at last:
"Girl, for I see you scorn my courtesies,
Take warning: yonder man is surely dead;
And I compel all creatures to my will.
Not eat nor drink? And wherefore wail for one
Who put your beauty to this flout and scorn 20
By dressing it in rags? Amazed am I,
Beholding how you butt against my wish,
That I forbear you thus: cross me no more.
At least put off to please me this poor gown,
This silken rag, this beggar-woman's weed:
I love that beauty should go beautifully:
For see you not my gentlewomen here,
How gay, how suited to the house of one
Who loves that beauty should go beautifully?
Rise therefore; robe yourself in this: obey." 30

He spoke, and one among his gentlewomen
Display'd a splendid silk of foreign loom,
Where like a shoaling sea the lovely blue
Play'd into green, and thicker down the front
With jewels than the sward with drops of dew,
When all night long a cloud clings to the hill,
And with the dawn ascending lets the day
Strike where it clung: so thickly shone the gems.

But Enid answer'd, harder to be mov'd
Than hardest tyrants in their day of power,
With life-long injuries burning unavenged,
And now their hour has come; and Enid said:

“In this poor gown my dear lord found me first,
And lov'd me serving in my father's hall:
In this poor gown I rode with him to court,
And there the Queen array'd me like the sun:
In this poor gown he bade me clothe myself,
When now we rode upon this fatal quest 10
Of honour, where no honour can be gain'd:
And this poor gown I will not cast aside
Until himself arise a living man,
And bid me cast it. I have griefs enough:
Pray you be gentle, pray you let me be:
I never loved, can never love but him:
Yea, God, I pray you of your gentleness,
He being as he is, to let me be.”

Then strode the brute Earl up and down his hall,
And took his russet beard between his teeth; 20
Last, coming up quite close, and in his mood
Crying, “I count it of no more avail,
Dame, to be gentle than ungentle with you;
Take my salute,” unknighly with flat hand,
However lightly, smote her on the cheek.

Then Enid, in her utter helplessness,
And since she thought, “He had not dared to do it,
Except he surely knew my lord was dead,”
Sent forth a sudden sharp and bitter cry, 30
As of a wild thing taken in the trap,
Which sees the trapper coming through the wood.

This heard Geraint, and grasping at his sword
(It lay beside him in the hollow shield),
Made but a single bound, and with a sweep of it
Shore through the swarthy neck, and like a ball
The russet-bearded head roll'd on the floor.
So died Earl Doorm by him he counted dead.
And all the men and women in the hall

Rose when they saw the dead man rise, and fled
Yelling as from a spectre, and the two
Were left alone together, and he said:

“Enid, I have used you worse than that dead
man—

Done you more wrong: we both have undergone
That trouble which has left me thrice your own:
Henceforward I will rather die than doubt.
And here I lay this penance on myself,
Not, though mine own ears heard you yestermorn—
You thought me sleeping, but I heard you say, 10
I heard you say, that you were no true wife.
I swear I will not ask your meaning in it:
I do believe yourself against yourself,
And will henceforward rather die than doubt.”

And Enid could not say one tender word,
She felt so blunt and stupid at the heart:
She only pray'd him, “Fly, they will return
And slay you; fly, your charger is without,
My palfrey lost.” “Then, Enid, shall you ride
Behind me.” “Yea,” said Enid, “let us go.” 20
And moving out they found the stately horse,
Who now no more a vassal to the thief,
But free to stretch his limbs in lawful fight,
Neigh'd with all gladness as they came, and stoop'd
With a low whinny toward the pair: and she
Kiss'd the white star upon his noble front,
Glad also; then Geraint upon the horse
Mounted, and reach'd a hand, and on his foot
She set her own and climb'd; he turn'd his face
And kiss'd her climbing, and she cast her arms 30
About him, and at once they rode away.

And never yet, since high in Paradise
O'er the four rivers the first roses blew,
Came purer pleasure unto mortal kind
Than liv'd through her, who in that perilous hour
Put hand to hand beneath her husband's heart,
And felt him hers again: she did not weep,
But o'er her meek eyes came a happy mist

Like that which kept the heart of Eden green
Before the useful trouble of the rain:
Yet not so misty were her meek blue eyes
As not to see before them on the path,
Right in the gateway of the bandit hold,
A knight of Arthur's court, who laid his lance
In rest, and made as if to fall upon him.
Then, fearing for his hurt and loss of blood,
She, with her mind all full of what had chanc'd,
Shriek'd to the stranger, "Slay not a dead man!" 10
"The voice of Enid," said the knight; but she,
Beholding it was Edyrn son of Nudd,
Was mov'd so much the more, and shriek'd again,
"O cousin, slay not him who gave you life."
And Edyrn, moving frankly forward, spake:
"My lord Geraint, I greet you with all love;
I took you for a bandit knight of Doorm;
And fear not, Enid, I should fall upon him,
Who love you, Prince, with something of the love
Wherewith we love the Heaven that chastens us 20
For once, when I was up so high in pride
That I was halfway down the slope to Hell
By overthrowing me you threw me higher.
Now, made a knight of Arthur's Table Round,
And since I knew this Earl, when I myself
Was half a bandit in my lawless hour,
I come the mouthpiece of our King to Doorm
(The King is close behind me), bidding him
Disband himself, and scatter all his powers,
Submit, and hear the judgment of the King." 30

"He hears the judgment of the King of kings,"
Cried the wan Prince; "and lo, the powers of Doorm
Are scatter'd," and he pointed to the field.
Where, huddl'd here and there on mound and knoll,
Were men and women staring and aghast,
While some yet fled; and then he plainlier told
How the huge Earl lay slain within his hall.
But when the knight besought him, "Follow me,
Prince, to the camp, and in the King's own ear
Speak what has chanc'd; you surely have endur'd 40
Strange chances here alone;" that other flush'd,

And hung his head, and halted in reply,
 Fearing the mild face of the blameless King,
 And after madness acted question ask'd:
 Till Edyrn crying, "If you will not go
 To Arthur, then will Arthur come to you,"
 "Enough," he said, "I follow," and they went.
 But Enid in their going had two fears,
 One from the bandits scatter'd in the field,
 And one from Edyrn. Every now and then,
 When Edyrn rein'd his charger at her side, 10
 She shrank a little. In a hollow land,
 From which old fires have broken, men may fear
 Fresh fire and ruin. He, perceiving, said:

"Fair and dear cousin, you that most had cause
 To fear me, fear no longer, I am chang'd.
 Yourself were first the blameless cause to make
 My nature's prideful sparkle in the blood
 Break into furious flame; being repuls'd
 By Yniol and yourself, I schem'd and wrought 20
 Until I overturn'd him; then set up
 (With one main purpose ever at my heart)
 My haughty jousts, and took a paramour;
 Did her mock honour as the fairest fair,
 And, toppling over all antagonism,
 So wax'd in pride that I believ'd myself
 Unconquerable, for I was well-nigh mad:
 And, but for my main purpose in these jousts,
 I should have slain your father, seized yourself.
 I lived in hope that sometime you would come 30
 To these my lists with him whom best you lov'd;
 And there, poor cousin, with your meek blue eyes,
 The truest eyes that ever answer'd Heaven,
 Behold me overturn and trample on him.
 Then, had you cried, or knelt, or pray'd to me,
 I should not less have kill'd him. And you came,—
 But once you came,—and with your own true eyes
 Beheld the man you loved (I speak as one
 Speaks of a service done him) overthrow
 My proud self, and my purpose three years old,
 And set his foot upon me, and give me life. 40
 There was I broken down; there was I saved:

Though thence I rode all sham'd, hating the life
He gave me, meaning to be rid of it.
And all the penance the Queen laid upon me
Was but to rest awhile within her court;
Where first as sullen as a beast new cag'd,
And waiting to be treated like a wolf,
Because I knew my deeds were known, I found,
Instead of scornful pity or pure scorn,
Such fine reserve and noble reticence,
Manners so kind, yet stately, such a grace 10
Of tenderest courtesy, that I began
To glance behind me at my former life.
And find that it had been the wolf's indeed:
And oft I talk'd with Dubric, the high saint,
Who, with mild heat of holy oratory,
Subdu'd me somewhat to that gentleness,
Which, when it weds with manhood, makes a man.
And you were often there about the Queen,
But saw me not, or mark'd not if you saw;
Nor did I care or dare to speak with you, 20
But kept myself aloof till I was chang'd;
And fear not, cousin; I am chang'd indeed."

He spoke, and Enid easily believ'd,
Like simple noble natures, credulous
Of what they long for, good in friend or foe,
There most in those who most have done them ill.
And when they reach'd the camp, the King himself
Advanc'd to greet them, and beholding her
Though pale, yet happy, ask'd her not a word,
But went apart with Edyrn, whom he held 30
In converse for a little, and return'd,
And, gravely smiling, lifted her from horse,
And kiss'd her with all pureness, brother-like,
And show'd an empty tent allotted her,
And glancing for a minute, till he saw her
Pass into it, turn'd to the Prince, and said:

"Prince, when of late you pray'd me for my leave
To move to your own land, and there defend
Your marches, I was prick'd with some reproof,

As one that let foul wrong stagnate and be,
By having look'd too much through alien eyes,
And wrought too long with delegated hands,
Not used mine own: but now behold me come
To cleanse this common sewer of all my realm,
With Edyrn and with others: have you look'd
At Edyrn? have you seen how nobly chang'd?
This work of his is great and wonderful.
His very face with change of heart is chang'd.
The world will not believe a man repents; 10
And this wise world of ours is mainly right.
Full seldom *doth* a man repent, or use
Both grace and will to pick the vicious quitch
Of blood and custom wholly out of him,
And make all clean, and plant himself afresh.
Edyrn has done it, weeding all his heart
As I will weed this land before I go.
I, therefore, made him of our Table Round,
Not rashly, but have prov'd him every way
One of our noblest, our most valorous, 20
Sanest and most obedient: and indeed
This work of Edyrn wrought upon himself
After a life of violence, seems to me
A thousandfold more great and wonderful
Than if some knight of mine, risking his life,
My subject with my subjects under him,
Should make an onslaught single on a realm
Of robbers, though he slew them one by one,
And were himself nigh wounded to the death."

So spake the King; low bow'd the Prince, and felt 30
His work was neither great nor wonderful,
And pass'd to Enid's tent; and thither came
The King's own leech to look into his hurt;
And Enid tended on him there; and there
Her constant motion round him, and the breath
Of her sweet tendance hovering over him,
Fill'd all the genial courses of his blood
With deeper and with ever deeper love,
As the south-west that blowing Bala lake
Fills all the sacred Dee.—So pass'd the days. 40

But while Geraint lay healing of his hurt,
The blameless King went forth and cast his eyes
On whom his father Uther left in charge
Long since, to guard the justice of the King:
He look'd, and found them wanting; and as now
Men weed the white horse on the Berkshire hills
To keep him bright and clean as heretofore,
He rooted out the slothful officer
Or guilty, which for bribe had wink'd at wrong,
And in their chairs set up a stronger race 10
With hearts and hands, and sent a thousand men
To till the wastes, and moving everywhere
Clear'd the dark places and let in the law,
And broke the bandit holds and cleans'd the land.

Then, when Geraint was whole again, they pass'd
With Arthur to Caerleon upon Usk.

There the great Queen once more embrac'd her
friend,

And cloth'd her in apparel like the day.
And though Geraint could never take again
That comfort from their converse which he took 20
Before the Queen's fair name was breath'd upon,
He rested well content that all was well.

Thence after tarrying for a space they rode,
And fifty knights rode with them to the shores
Of Severn, and they pass'd to their own land.

And there he kept the justice of the King
So vigorously yet mildly, that all hearts
Applauded, and the spiteful whisper died:
And being ever foremost in the chase,
And victor at the tilt and tournament, 30
They call'd him the great Prince and man of men.

But Enid, whom her ladies lov'd to call
Enid the Fair, a grateful people named
Enid the Good; and in their halls arose
The cry of children, Enids and Geraints
Of times to be; nor did he doubt her more,
But rested in her fealty, till he crown'd
A happy life with a fair death, and fell
Against the heathen of the Northern Sea
In battle, fighting for the blameless King. 40

BALIN AND BALAN

Pellam the King, who held and lost with Lot
In the first war, and had his realm restored
But render'd tributary, fail'd of late
To send his tribute; wherefore Arthur call'd
His treasurer, one of many years, and spake,
"Go thou with him and him and bring it to us,
Lest we should set one truer on his throne.
Man's word is God in man."

His Baron said
"We go but harken: there be two strange knights
Who sit near Camelot at a fountain side, 10
A mile beneath the forest, challenging
And overthrowing every knight who comes.
Wilt thou I undertake them as we pass,
And send them to thee?"

Arthur laugh'd upon him.
"Old friend, too old to be so young, depart,
Delay not thou for aught, but let them sit,
Until they find a lustier than themselves."

So these departed. Early, one fair dawn,
The light-wing'd spirit of his youth return'd
On Arthur's heart; he arm'd himself and went, 20
So coming to the fountain-side beheld
Balin and Balan sitting statuelike,
Brethren, to right and left the spring, that down,
From underneath a plume of lady-fern,
Sang, and the sand danced at the bottom of it.
And on the right of Balin Balin's horse
Was fast beside an alder, on the left
Of Balan Balan's near a poplar tree.
"Fair Sirs," said Arthur, "wherefore sit ye here?"
Balin and Balan answer'd "For the sake 30
Of glory; we be mightier men than all
In Arthur's court; that also have we proved;
For whatsoever knight against us came
Or I or he have easily overthrown."

"I too," said Arthur, "am of Arthur's hall,
But rather proven in his Paynim wars
Than famous jousts: but see, or proven or not,
Whether me likewise ye can overthrow."
And Arthur lightly smote the brethren down,
And lightly so return'd, and no man knew.

Then Balin rose, and Balan, and beside
The carolling water set themselves again,
And spake no word until the shadow turn'd;
When from the fringe of coppice round them burst 10
A spangled pursuivant, and crying "Sirs,
Rise, follow! ye be sent for by the King."
They follow'd; whom when Arthur seeing ask'd
"Tell me your names; why sat ye by the well?"
Balin the stillness of a minute broke
Saying "An unmelodious name to thee,
Balin, 'the Savage'—that addition thine—
My brother and my better, this man here,
Balan. I smote upon the naked skull
A thrall of thine in open hall, my hand 20
Was gauntleted, half slew him; for I heard
He had spoken evil of me; thy just wrath
Sent me a three-years' exile from thine eyes.
I have not lived my life delightsomely:
For I that did that violence to thy thrall,
Had often wrought some fury on myself,
Saving for Balan: those three kingless years
Have past—were wormwood-bitter to me. King,
Methought that if we sat beside the well,
And hurl'd to ground what knight soever spurr'd 30
Against us, thou would'st take me gladlier back,
And make, as ten-times worthier to be thine
Than twenty Balins, Balan knight. I have said.
Not so—not all. A man of thine to-day
Abash'd us both, and brake my boast. Thy will?"
Said Arthur, "Thou hast ever spoken truth;
Thy too fierce manhood would not let thee lie.
Rise, my true knight. As children learn, be thou
Wiser for falling! walk with me, and move
To music with thine Order and the King. 40

Thy chair, a grief to all the brethren, stands
Vacant, but thou retake it, mine again!"

Thereafter, when Sir Balin enter'd hall,
The Lost one Found was greeted as in Heaven
With joy that blazed itself in woodland wealth
Of leaf, and gayest garlandage of flowers,
Along the walls and down the board; they sat,
And cup clash'd cup; they drank and some one sang,
Sweet-voiced, a song of welcome, whereupon
Their common shout in chorus, mounting, made 10
Those banners of twelve battles overhead
Stir, as they stirr'd of old, when Arthur's host
Proclaim'd him Victor, and the day was won.

Then Balin added to their Order lived
A wealthier life than heretofore with these
And Balin, till their embassy return'd.

"Sir King" they brought report "we hardly found,
So bush'd about it is with gloom, the hall
Of him to whom ye sent us, Pellam, once
A Christless foe of thine as ever dash'd 20
Horse against horse; but seeing that thy realm
Hath prosper'd in the name of Christ, the King
Took, as in rival heat, to holy things;
And finds himself descended from the Saint
Arimathæan Joseph; him who first
Brought the great faith to Britain over seas;
He boasts his life as purer than thine own;
Eats scarce enow to keep his pulse abeat;
Hath push'd aside his faithful wife, nor lets
Or dame or damsel enter at his gates 30
Lest he should be polluted. This gray King
Show'd us a shrine wherein were wonders—yea—
Rich arks with priceless bones of martyrdom,
Thorns of the crown and shivers of the cross,
And therewithal (for thus he told us) brought
By holy Joseph hither, that same spear
Wherewith the Roman pierced the side of Christ.
He much amazed us; after, when we sought
The tribute, answer'd 'I have quite foregone

All matters of this world: Garlon, mine heir,
Of him demand it,' which this Garlon gave
With much ado, railing at thine and thee.

"But when we left, in those deep woods we found
A knight of thine spear-stricken from behind,
Dead, whom we buried; more than one of us
Cried out on Garlon, but a woodman there
Reported of some demon in the woods
Was once a man, who driven by evil tongues
From all his fellows, lived alone, and came 10
To learn black magic, and to hate his kind
With such a hate, that when he died, his soul
Became a Fiend, which, as the man in life
Was wounded by blind tongues he saw not whence,
Strikes from behind. This woodman show'd the
cave
From which he sallies, and wherein he dwelt.
We saw the hoof-print of a horse, no more."

Then Arthur, "Let who goes before me, see
He do not fall behind me: foully slain
And villainously! who will hunt for me 20
This demon of the woods?" Said Balan, "I"!
So claim'd the quest and rode away, but first,
Embracing Balin, "Good my brother, hear!
Let not thy moods prevail, when I am gone
Who used to lay them! hold them outer fiends,
Who leap at thee to tear thee; shake them aside,
Dreams ruling when wit sleeps! yea, but to dream
That any of these would wrong thee, wrongs thyself.
Witness their flowery welcome. Bound are they
To speak no evil. Truly save for fears, 30
My fears for thee, so rich a fellowship
Would make me wholly blest: thou one of them,
Be one indeed: consider them, and all
Their bearing in their common bond of love,
No more of hatred than in Heaven itself,
No more of jealousy than in Paradise."

So Balan warn'd, and went; Balin remain'd:
Who—for but three brief moons had glanced away

From being knighted till he smote the thrall,
And faded from the presence into years
Of exile—now would strictlier set himself
To learn what Arthur meant by courtesy,
Manhood, and knighthood; wherefore hover'd round
Lancelot, but when he mark'd his high sweet smile
In passing, and a transitory word
Make knight or churl or child or damsel seem
From being smiled at happier in themselves—
Sigh'd, as a boy lame-born beneath a height,
That glooms his valley, sighs to see the peak
Sun-flush'd, or touch at night the northern star;
For one from out his village lately climb'd
And brought report of azure lands and fair,
Far seen to left and right; and he himself
Hath hard'ly scaled with help a hundred feet
Up from the base: so Balin marvelling oft
How far beyond him Lancelot seem'd to move,
Groan'd, and at times would mutter, "These be gifts,
Born with the blood, not learnable, divine,
Beyond *my* reach. Well had I foughten—well—
In those fierce wars, struck hard—and had I crown'd
With my slain self the heaps of whom I slew—
So—better!—But this worship of the Queen,
That honour too wherein she holds him—this,
This was the sunshine that hath given the man
A growth, a name that branches o'er the rest,
And strength against all odds, and what the King
So prizes—overprizes—gentleness.
Her likewise would I worship an I might.
I never can be close with her, as he
That brought her hither. Shall I pray the King
To let me bear some token of his Queen
Whereon to gaze, remembering her—forget
My heats and violences? live afresh?
What, if the Queen disdain'd to grant it! nay
Being so stately-gentle, would she make
My darkness blackness? and with how sweet grace
She greeted my return! Bold will I be—
Some goodly cognizance of Guinevere,
In lieu of this rough beast upon my shield,

10

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30

40

Langued gules, and tooth'd with grinning sav-
agery."

And Arthur, when Sir Balin sought him, said
"What wilt thou bear?" Balin was bold, and asked
To bear her own crown-royal upon shield,
Whereat she smiled and turn'd her to the King,
Who answer'd "Thou shalt put the crown to use.
The crown is but the shadow of the King,
And this a shadow's shadow, let him have it,
So this will help him of his violences!"
"No shadow," said Sir Balin, "O my Queen,
But light to me! no shadow, O my King
But golden earnest of a gentler life!"

10

So Balin bare the crown, and all the knights
Approved him, and the Queen, and all the world
Made music, and he felt his being move
In music with his Order, and the King.

The nightingale, full-toned in middle May,
Hath ever and anon a note so thin
It seems another voice in other groves;
Thus, after some quick burst of sudden wrath,
The music in him seem'd to change, and grow
Faint and far-off.

20

And once he saw the thrall
His passion half had gauntleted to death,
That causer of his banishment and shame,
Smile at him, as he deem'd, presumptuously:
His arm half rose to strike again, but fell:
The memory of that cognizance on shield
Weighted it down, but in himself he moan'd:

"Too high this mount of Camelot for me:
These high-set courtesies are not for me.
Shall I not rather prove the worse for these?
Fierier and stormier from restraining, break
Into some madness ev'n before the Queen?"

30

Thus, as a hearth lit in a mountain home,
And glancing on the window, when the gloom
Of twilight deepens round it, seems a flame
That rages in the woodland far below,
So when his moods were darken'd, court and King
And all the kindly warmth of Arthur's hall
Shadow'd an angry distance: yet he strove
To learn the graces of their Table, fought
Hard with himself, and seem'd at length in peace.

Then chanced, one morning, that Sir Balin sat 10
Close-bower'd in that garden nigh the hall.
A walk of roses ran from door to door;
A walk of lilies crost it to the bower:
And down that range of roses the great Queen
Came with slow steps, the morning on her face;
And all in shadow from the counter door
Sir Lancelot as to meet her, then at once,
As if he saw not, glanced aside, and paced
The long white walk of lilies toward the bower.
Follow'd the Queen; Sir Balin heard her "Prince, 20
Art thou so little loyal to thy Queen,
As pass without good morrow to thy Queen?"
To whom Sir Lancelot with his eyes on earth,
"Fain would I still be loyal to the Queen."
"Yea so" she said "but so to pass me by—
So loyal scarce is loyal to thyself,
Whom all men rate the king of courtesy.
Let be: ye stand, fair lord, as in a dream."

Then Lancelot with his hand among the flowers
"Yea—for a dream. Last night methought I saw 30
That maiden Saint who stands with lily in hand
In yonder shrine. All round her prest the dark,
And all the light upon her silver face
Flow'd from the spiritual lily that she held.
Lo! these her emblems drew mine eyes—away:
For see, how perfect-pure! As light a flush
As hardly tints the blossom of the quince
Would mar their charm of stainless maidenhood."

"Sweeter to me" she said "this garden rose
Deep-hued and many-folded! sweeter still
The wild-wood hyacinth and the bloom of May.
Prince, we have ridd'n before among the flowers
In those fair days—not all as cool as these,
Tho' season-earlier. Art thou sad? or sick?
Our noble King will send thee his own leech—
Sick? or for any matter anger'd at me?"

Then Lancelot lifted his large eyes; they dwelt
Deep-tranced on hers, and could not fall: her hue 10
Changed at his gaze: so turning side by side
They past, and Balin started from his bower.

"Queen? subject? but I see not what I see.
Damsel and lover? hear not what I hear.
My father hath begotten me in his wrath.
I suffer from the things before me, know,
Learn nothing; am not worthy to be knight;
A churl, a clown!" and in him gloom on gloom
Deepen'd: he sharply caught his lance and shield,
Nor stay'd to crave permission of the king, 20
But, mad for strange adventure, dash'd away.

He took the selfsame track as Balan, saw
The fountain where they sat together, sigh'd
"Was I not better there with him?" and rode
The skyless woods, but under open blue
Came on the hoarhead woodman at a bough
Wearily hewing. "Churl, thine axe!" he cried,
Descended, and disjointed it at a blow:
To whom the woodman utter'd wonderingly
"Lord, thou couldst lay the Devil of these woods 30
If arm of flesh could lay him." Balin cried
"Him, or the viler devil who plays his part,
To lay that devil would lay the Devil in me."
"Nay" said the churl, "our devil is a truth,
I saw the flash of him but yestereven.
And some *do* say that our Sir Garlon too
Hath learn'd black magic, and to ride unseen.
Look to the cave." But Balin answer'd him
"Old fabler, these be fancies of the churl,

Look to thy woodcraft," and so leaving him,
 Now with slack rein and careless of himself,
 Now with dug spur and raving at himself,
 Now with droopt brow down the long glades he
 rode;

So mark'd not on his right a cavern-chasm
 Yawn over darkness, where, not far within,
 The whole day died, but, dying, gleam'd on rocks
 Roof-pendent, sharp; and others from the floor,
 Tusklke, arising, made that mouth of night
 Whereout the Demon issued up from Hell.

10

He mark'd not this, but blind and deaf to all
 Save that chain'd rage, which ever yelpt within,
 Past eastward from the falling sun. At once
 He felt the hollow-beaten mosses thud

And tremble, and then the shadow of a spear,
 Shot from behind him, ran along the ground.
 Sideways he started from the path, and saw,

With pointed lance as if to pierce, a shape,
 A light of armour by him flash, and pass

20

And vanish in the woods; and follow'd this,

But all so blind in rage that unawares

He burst his lance against a forest bough,
 Dishorsed himself, and rose again, and fled

Far, till the castle of a King, the hall

Of Pellam, lichen-bearded, gray'ly draped

With streaming grass, appear'd, low-built but
 strong;

The ruinous donjon as a knoll of moss,

The battlement overtopt with ivytods,

A home of bats, in every tower an owl.

Then spake the men of Pellam crying "Lord,
 Why wear ye this crown-royal upon shield?"

30

Said Balin "For the fairest and the best

Of ladies living gave me this to bear."

So stall'd his horse, and strode across the court,

But found the greetings both of knight and King

Faint in the low dark hall of banquet: leaves

Laid their green faces flat against the panes,

Sprays grated, and the canker'd boughs without

Whined in the wood; for all was hush'd within,

Till when at feast Sir Garlon likewise ask'd
"Why wear ye that crown-royal?" Balin said
"The Queen we worship, Lancelot, I, and all,
As fairest, best and purest, granted me
To bear it!" Such a sound (for Arthur's knights
Were hated strangers in the hall) as makes
The white swan-mother, sitting, when she hears
A strange knee rustle thro' her secret reeds,
Made Garlon, hissing; then he sourly smiled.
"Fairest I grant her: I have seen; but best, 10
Best, purest? *thou* from Arthur's hall, and yet
So simple! hast thou eyes, or if, are these
So far besotted that they fail to see
This fair wife-worship cloaks a secret shame?
Truly, ye men of Arthur be but babes."

A goblet on the board by Balin, boss'd
With holy Joseph's legend, on his right
Stood, all of massiest bronze: one side had sea
And ship and sail and angels blowing on it:
And one was rough with wattling, and the walls 20
Of that low church he built at Glastonbury.
This Balin graspt, but while in act to hurl,
Thro' memory of that token on the shield
Relax'd his hold: "I will be gentle" he thought
"And passing gentle" caught his hand away.
Then fiercely to Sir Garlon "Eyes have I
That saw to-day the shadow of a spear,
Shot from behind me, run along the ground;
Eyes too that long have watch'd how Lancelot draws 30
From homage to the best and purest, might,
Name, manhood, and a grace, but scantily thine,
Who, sitting in thine own hall, canst endure
To mouth so huge a foulness—to thy guest,
Me, me of Arthur's Table. Felon talk!
Let be! no more!"

But not the less by night
The scorn of Garlon, poisoning all his rest,
Stung him in dreams. At length, and dim thro'
leaves

Blinkt the white morn, sprays grated, and old
boughs

Whined in the wood. He rose, descended, met
The scorner in the castle court, and fain,
For hate and loathing, would have past him by;
But when Sir Garlon utter'd mocking-wise;
"What, wear ye still that same crown-scandalous?"
His countenance blacken'd, and his forehead veins
Bloated, and branch'd; and tearing out of sheath
The brand, Sir Balin with a fiery "Ha!

So thou be shadow, here I make thee ghost," 10
Hard upon helm smote him, and the blade flew
Splintering in six, and clinkt upon the stones.

Then Garlon, reeling slowly backward, fell,
And Balin by the banneret of his helm
Dragg'd him, and struck, but from the castle a cry
Sounded across the court, and—men-at-arms,
A score with pointed lances, making at him—
He dash'd the pummel at the foremost face,
Beneath a low door dipt, and made his feet
Wings thro' a glimmering gallery, till he mark'd 20
The portal of King Pellam's chapel wide
And inward to the wall; he stept behind;

Thence in a moment heard them pass like wolves
Howling; but while he stared about the shrine,
In which he scarce could spy the Christ for Saints,
Beheld before a golden altar lie

The longest lance his eyes had ever seen,
Point-painted red; and seizing thereupon
Push'd thro' an open casement down, lean'd on it,
Leapt in a semicircle, and lit on earth; 30

Then hand at ear, and harkening from what side
The blindfold rummage buried in the walls
Might echo, ran the counter path, and found
His charger, mounted on him and away.

An arrow whizz'd to the right, one to the left,
One overhead; and Pellam's feeble cry
"Stay, stay him! he defileth heavenly things
With earthly uses"—made him quickly dive
Beneath the boughs, and race thro' many a mile
Of dense and open, till his goodly horse, 40

Arising wearily at a fallen oak,
Stumbled headlong, and cast him face to ground.

Half-wroth he had not ended, but all glad,
Knightlike, to find his charger yet unlamed,
Sir Balin drew the shield from off his neck,
Stared at the priceless cognizance, and thought
"I have shamed thee so that now thou shamest me,
Thee will I bear no more," high on a branch
Hung it, and turn'd aside into the woods
And there in gloom cast himself all along,
Moaning "My violences, my violences!"

10

But now the wholesome music of the wood
Was dumb'd by one from out the hall of Mark,
A damsel-errant, warbling, as she rode
The woodland alleys, Vivien, with her Squire.

"The fire of Heaven has kill'd the barren cold,
And kindled all the plain and all the wold.
The new leaf ever pushes off the old.
The fire of Heaven is not the flame of Hell.

"Old priest, who mumble worship in your quire— 20
Old monk and nun, ye scorn the world's desire,
Yet in your frosty cells ye feel the fire!
The fire of Heaven is not the flame of Hell.

"The fire of Heaven is on the dusty ways.
The wayside blossoms open to the blaze.
The whole wood-world is one full peal of praise.
The fire of Heaven is not the flame of Hell.

"The fire of Heaven is lord of all things good,
And starve not thou this fire within thy blood,
But follow Vivien thro' the fiery flood!
The fire of Heaven is not the flame of Hell!"

30

Then turning to her Squire "This fire of Heaven,
This old sun-worship, boy, will rise again,
And beat the cross to earth, and break the King
And all his Table."

Then they reach'd a glade,
 Where under one long lane of cloudless air
 Before another wood, the royal crown
 Sparkled, and swaying upon a restless elm
 Drew the vague glance of Vivien, and her Squire;
 Amazed were these; "Lo there" she cried—"a
 crown—

Borne by some high lord-prince of Arthur's hall,
 And there a horse! the rider? where is he?
 See, yonder lies one dead within the wood.
 Not dead; he stirs!—but sleeping. I will speak. 10
 Hail, royal knight, we break on thy sweet rest,
 Not, doubtless, all unearn'd by noble deeds.
 But bounden art thou, if from Arthur's hall,
 To help the weak. Behold, I fly from shame,
 A lustful King, who sought to win my love
 Thro' evil ways: the knight, with whom I rode,
 Hath suffer'd misadventure, and my Squire
 Hath in him small defence; but thou, Sir Prince,
 Wilt surely guide me to the warrior King,
 Arthur the blameless, pure as any maid, 20
 To get me shelter for my maidenhood.
 I charge thee by that crown upon thy shield,
 And by the great Queen's name, arise and hence."

And Balin rose, "Thither no more! nor Prince
 Nor knight am I, but one that hath defamed
 The cognizance she gave me: here I dwell
 Savage among the savage woods, here die—
 Die: let the wolves' black maws ensepulchre
 Their brother beast, whose anger was his lord.
 O me, that such a name as Guinevere's,
 Which our high Lancelot hath so lifted up, 30
 And been thereby uplifted, should thro' me,
 My violence, and my villainy, come to shame."

Thereat she suddenly laugh'd and shrill, anon
 Sigh'd all as suddenly. Said Balin to her
 "Is this thy courtesy—to mock me, ha?
 Hence, for I will not with thee." Again she sigh'd
 "Pardon, sweet lord! we maidens often laugh
 When sick at heart, when rather we should weep.

I knew thee wrong'd. I brake upon thy rest,
 And now full loth am I to break thy dream,
 But thou art man, and canst abide a truth,
 Tho' bitter. Hither, boy—and mark me well.
 Dost thou remember at Caerleon once—
 A year ago—nay, then I love thee not—
 Ay, thou rememberest well—one summer dawn—
 By the great tower—Caerleon upon Usk—
 Nay, truly we were hidden: this fair lord,
 The flower of all their vestal knighthood, knelt 10
 In amorous homage—knelt—what else?—O ay
 Knelt, and drew down from out his night-black hair
 And mumbled that white hand whose ring'd caress
 Had wander'd from her own King's golden head,
 And lost itself in darkness, till she cried—
 I thought the great tower would crash down on
 both—

'Rise, my sweet King, and kiss me on the lips,
 Thou art my King.' This lad, whose lightest word
 Is mere white truth in simple nakedness,
 Saw them embrace: he reddens, cannot speak, 20
 So bashful, he! but all the maiden Saints,
 The deathless mother-maidenhood of Heaven,
 Cry out upon her. Up then, ride with me!
 Talk not of shame! thou canst not, an thou would'st,
 Do these more shame than these have done them-
 selves."

She lied with ease; but horror-stricken he,
 Remembering that dark bower at Camelot,
 Breathed in a dismal whisper "It is truth."

Sunnily she smiled "And even in this lone wood,
 Sweet lord, ye do right well to whisper this. 30
 Fools prate, and perish traitors. Woods have
 tongues,

As walls have ears: but thou shalt go with me,
 And we will speak at first exceeding low.
 Meet is it the good King be not deceived.
 See now, I set thee high on vantage ground,
 From whence to watch the time, and eagle-like
 Stoop at thy will on Lancelot and the Queen."

She ceased; his evil spirit upon him leapt,
 He ground his teeth together, sprang with a yell,
 Tore from the branch, and cast on earth, the shield,
 Drove his mail'd heel athwart the royal crown,
 Stamp'd all into defacement, hurl'd it from him
 Among the forest weeds, and cursed the tale,
 The told-of, and the teller.

That weird yell,

Unearthlier than all shriek of bird or beast,
 Thrill'd thro' the woods; and Balan lurking there
 (His quest was unaccomplish'd) heard and thought ¹⁰
 "The scream of that Wood-devil I came to quell!"
 Then nearing "Lo! he hath slain some brother-
 knight,
 And tramples on the goodly shield to show
 His loathing of our Order and the Queen.
 My quest, meseems, is here. Or devil or man
 Guard thou thine head." Sir Balin spake not word,
 But snatch'd a sudden buckler from the Squire,
 And vaulted on his horse, and so they crash'd
 In onset, and King Pellam's holy spear,
 Reputed to be red with sinless blood, 20
 Redden'd at once with sinful, for the point
 Across the maiden shield of Balan prick'd
 The hauberk to the flesh; and Balin's horse
 Was wearied to the death, and, when they clash'd,
 Rolling back upon Balin, crush'd the man
 Inward, and either fell, and swoon'd away.

Then to her Squire mutter'd the damsel "Fools!
 This fellow hath wrought some foulness with his
 Queen:

Else never had he borne her crown, nor raved
 And thus foam'd over at a rival name: 30
 But thou, Sir Chick, that scarce hast broken shell,
 Art yet half-yolk, not even come to down—
 Who never sawest Caerleon upon Usk—
 And yet hast often pleaded for my love—
 See what I see, be thou where I have been,
 Or else Sir Chick—dismount and loose their casques
 I fain would know what manner of men they be."

And when the Squire had loosed them, "Goodly!—
look!

They might have cropt the myriad flower of May,
And butt each other here, like brainless bulls,
Dead for one heifer!"

Then the gentle Squire

"I hold them happy, so they died for love:
And, Vivien, tho' ye beat me like your dog,
I too could die, as now I live, for thee."

"Live on, Sir Boy," she cried. "I better prize
The living dog than the dead lion: away!
I cannot brook to gaze upon the dead." 10
Then leapt her palfry o'er the fallen oak,
And bounding forward, "Leave them to the wolves."

But when their foreheads felt the cooling air,
Balin first woke, and seeing that true face,
Familiar up from cradle-time, so wan,
Crawl'd slowly with low moans to where he lay,
And on his dying brother cast himself
Dying; and *he* lifted faint eyes; he felt
One near him; all at once they found the world,
Staring wild-wide; then with a childlike wail, 20
And drawing down the dim disastrous brow
That o'er him hung, he kiss'd it, moan'd and spake:

"O Balin, Balin, I that fain had died
To save thy life, have brought thee to thy death.
Why had ye not the shield I knew? and why
Trampled ye thus on that which bare the Crown?"

Then Balin told him brokenly, and in gasps,
All that had chanced, and Balin moan'd again.

"Brother, I dwelt a day in Pellam's hall:
This Garlon mock'd me, but I heeded not. 30
And one said 'Eat in peace! a liar is he,
And hates thee for the tribute!' this good knight
Told me, that twice a wanton damsel came,
And sought for Garlon at the castle-gates,

Whom Pellam drove away with holy heat.
 I well believe this damsel, and the one
 Who stood beside thee even now, the same.
 'She dwells among the woods' he said 'and meets
 And dallies with him in the Mouth of Hell.'
 Foul are their lives; foul are their lips; they lied.
 Pure as our own true Mother is our Queen."

"O brother" answer'd Balin "woe is me!
 My madness all thy life has been thy doom,
 Thy curse, and darken'd all thy day; and now 10
 The night has come. I scarce can see thee now.
 Goodnight! for we shall never bid again
 Goodmorrow—Dark my doom was here, and dark
 It will be there. I see thee now no more.
 I would not mine again should darken thine,
 Goodnight, true brother."

Balan answer'd low
 "Goodnight, true brother here! goodmorrow there!
 We two were born together, and we die
 Together by one doom:" and while he spoke
 Closed his death-drowsing eyes, and slept the sleep 20
 With Balin, either lock'd in either's arm.

MERLIN AND VIVIEN

A storm was coming, but the winds were still,
 And in the wild woods of Broceliande,
 Before an oak, so hollow, huge and old
 It look'd a tower of ruin'd masonwork,
 At Merlin's feet the wily Vivien lay.

The wily Vivien stole from Arthur's court.
 She hated all the knights, and heard in thought
 Their lavish comment when her name was nam'd.
 For once, when Arthur walking all alone, 30
 Vex'd at a rumour rife about the Queen,
 Had met her, Vivien, being greeted fair,
 Would fain have wrought upon his cloudy mood
 With reverent eyes mock-loyal, shaken voice,
 And flutter'd adoration, and at last

With dark sweet hints of some who priz'd him more
Than who should prize him most; at which the King
Had gaz'd upon her blankly and gone by.
But one had watch'd, and had not held his peace:
It made the laughter of an afternoon
That Vivien should attempt the blameless King.
And after that, she set herself to gain
Him, the most famous man of all those times,
Merlin, who knew the range of all their arts,
Had built the King his havens, ships, and halls,
Was also Bard, and knew the starry heavens;
The people call'd him Wizard; whom at first
She play'd about with slight and sprightly talk,
And vivid smiles, and faintly-venom'd points
Of slander, glancing here and grazing there;
And yielding to his kindlier moods, the Seer
Would watch her at her petulance, and play,
Ev'n when they seem'd unloveable, and laugh
As those that watch a kitten; thus he grew
Tolerant of what he half disdain'd, and she,
Perceiving that she was but half disdain'd,
Began to break her sports with graver fits,
Turn red or pale, would often when they met
Sigh fully, or all-silent gaze upon him
With such a fix'd devotion that the old man,
Though doubtful, felt the flattery, and at times
Would flatter his own wish in age for love,
And half believe her true: for thus at times
He waver'd; but that other clung to him,
Fix'd in her will, and so the seasons went.
Then fell upon him a great melancholy;
And leaving Arthur's court he gain'd the beach;
There found a little boat, and stept into it;
And Vivien follow'd, but he mark'd her not.
She took the helm and he the sail; the boat
Drave with a sudden wind across the deeps,
And touching Breton sands, they disembark'd.
And then she follow'd Merlin all the way,
Ev'n to the wild woods of Broceliande.
For Merlin once had told her of a charm,
The which if any wrought on any one
With woven paces and with waving arms,

10

20

30

The man so wrought on ever seem'd to lie
 Clos'd in the four walls of a hollow tower,
 From which was no escape for evermore;
 And none could find that man for evermore,
 Nor could he see but him who wrought the charm
 Coming and going, and he lay as dead
 And lost to life and use and name and fame.
 And Vivien ever sought to work the charm
 Upon the great Enchanter of the Time,
 As fancying that her glory would be great
 According to his greatness whom she quench'd.

10

There lay she all her length and kiss'd his feet,
 As if in deepest reverence and in love.
 A twist of gold was round her hair; a robe
 Of samite without price, that more exprest
 Than hid her, clung about her lissome limbs,
 In colour like the satin-shining palm
 On sallows in the windy gleams of March:
 And while she kiss'd them, crying, "Trample me.
 Dear feet, that I have follow'd through the world, 20
 And I will pay you worship; tread me down,
 And I will kiss you for it;" he was mute:
 So dark a forethought roll'd about his brain,
 As on a dull day in an Ocean cave
 The blind wave feeling round his long sea-hall
 In silence: wherefore, when she lifted up
 A face of sad appeal, and spake and said,
 "O Merlin, do you love me?" and again,
 "O Merlin, do you love me?" and once more,
 "Great Master, do you love me?" he was mute. 30
 And lissome Vivien, holding by his heel,
 Writhed toward him, slid up his knee and sat,
 Behind his ankle twined her hollow feet
 Together, curved an arm about his neck,
 Clung like a snake; and letting her left hand
 Droop from his mighty shoulder, as a leaf,
 Made with her right a comb of pearl to part
 The lists of such a beard as youth gone out
 Had left in ashes: then he spoke and said,
 Not looking at her, "Who are wise in love
 Love most, say least," and Vivien answer'd quick, 40

"I saw the little elf-god eyeless once
In Arthur's arras hall at Camelot:
But neither eyes nor tongue—O stupid child!
Yet you are wise who say it; let me think
Silence is wisdom: I am silent then,
And ask no kiss;" then adding all at once,
"And lo, I clothe myself with wisdom," drew
The vast and shaggy mantle of his beard
Across her neck and bosom to her knee,
And call'd herself a gilded summer fly 10
Caught in a great old tyrant spider's web.
Who meant to eat her up in that wild wood
Without one word. So Vivien call'd herself,
But rather seem'd a lovely baleful star
Veil'd in gray vapour; till he sadly smil'd:
"To what request for what strange boon," he said,
"Are these your pretty tricks and fooleries,
O Vivien, the preamble? yet my thanks,
For these have broken up my melancholy."

And Vivien answer'd smiling saucily, 20
"What, O my Master, have you found your voice?
I bid the stranger welcome. Thanks at last!
But yesterday you never open'd lip,
Except indeed to drink: no cup had we:
In mine own lady palms I cull'd the spring
That gather'd trickling dropwise from the cleft,
And made a pretty cup of both my hands
And offer'd you it kneeling: then you drank,
And knew no more, nor gave me one poor word;
Oh, no more thanks than might a goat have given, 30
With no more sign of reverence than a beard.
And when we halted at that other well,
And I was faint to swooning, and you lay
Foot-gilt with all the blossom-dust of those
Deep meadows we had traversed, did you know
That Vivien bathed your feet before her own?
And yet no thanks: and all through this wild wood
And all this morning when I fondled you:
Boon, yes, there was a boon, one not so strange—
How had I wrong'd you? surely you are wise, 40
But such a silence is more wise than kind."

And Merlin lock'd his hand in hers and said :
 "Oh, did you never lie upon the shore,
 And watch the curl'd white of the coming wave
 Glass'd in the slippery sand before it breaks?
 Ev'n such a wave, but not so pleasurable,
 Dark in the glass of some presageful mood,
 Had I for three days seen, ready to fall.
 And then I rose and fled from Arthur's court
 To break the mood. You follow'd me unask'd ;
 And when I look'd, and saw you following still, 10
 My mind involved yourself the nearest thing
 In that mind-mist: for shall I tell you truth?
 You seem'd that wave about to break upon me
 And sweep me from my hold upon the world.
 My use and name and fame. Your pardon, child.
 Your pretty sports have brighten'd all again.
 And ask your boon, for boon I owe you thrice,
 Once for wrong done you by confusion, next
 For thanks it seems till now neglected, last
 For these your dainty gambols: wherefore ask; 20
 And take this boon so strange and not so strange."

And Vivien answer'd smiling mournfully:
 "Oh, not so strange as my long asking it,
 Nor yet so strange as you yourself are strange,
 Nor half so strange as that dark mood of yours.
 I ever fear'd you were not wholly mine;
 And see, yourself have own'd you did me wrong
 The people call you prophet: let it be:
 But not of those that can expound themselves.
 Take Vivien for expounder; she will call 30
 That three-days-long presageful gloom of yours
 No presage, but the same mistrustful mood
 That makes you seem less noble than yourself,
 Whenever I have ask'd this very boon,
 Now ask'd again: for see you not, dear love,
 That such a mood as that, which lately gloom'd
 Your fancy when you saw me following you,
 Must make me fear still more you are not mine,
 Must make me yearn still more to prove you mine,
 And make me wish still more to learn this charm 40
 Of woven paces and of waving hands,

As proof of trust. O Merlin, teach it me;
The charm so taught will charm us both to rest.
For, grant me some slight power upon your fate,
I, feeling that you felt me worthy trust,
Should rest and let you rest, knowing you mine.
And therefore be as great as you are named,
Not muffled round with selfish reticence.
How hard you look and how denyingly!
Oh, if you think this wickedness in me,
That I should prove it on you unawares, 10
To make you lose your use and name and fame,
That makes me most indignant; then our bond
Had best be loos'd for ever: but think or not,
By Heaven that hears I tell you the clean truth,
As clean as blood of babes, as white as milk:
O Merlin, may this earth, if ever I,
If these unwitty wandering wits of mine,
Ev'n in the jumbl'd rubbish of a dream,
Have tript on such conjectural treachery—
May this hard earth cleave to the Nadir hell 20
Down, down, and close again, and nip me flat,
If I be such a traitress. Yield my boon,
Till which I scarce can yield you all I am;
And grant my re-reiterated wish,
The great proof of your love: because I think,
However wise, you hardly know me yet."

And Merlin loosed his hand from hers and said,
"I never was less wise, however wise,
Too curious Vivien, though you talk of trust,
Than when I told you first of such a charm. 30
Yea, if you talk of trust I tell you this,
Too much I trusted when I told you that,
And stirr'd this vice in you which ruin'd man
Through woman the first hour; for howsoe'er
In children a great curiousness be well,
Who have to learn themselves and all the world,
In you, that are no child, for still I find
Your face is practised when I spell the lines,
I call it—well, I will not call it vice:
But since you name yourself the summer fly, 40
I well could wish a cobweb for the gnat,

That settles, beaten back, and beaten back
 Settles, till one could yield for weariness:
 But since I will not yield to give you power
 Upon my life and use and name and fame,
 Why will you never ask some other boon?
 Yea, by God's rood, I trusted you too much."

And Vivien, like the tenderest-hearted maid
 That ever bided tryst at village stile,
 Made answer, either eyelid wet with tears:
 "Nay, Master, be not wrathful with your maid, 10
 Caress her: let her feel herself forgiven
 Who feels no heart to ask another boon.
 I think you hardly know the tender rhyme
 Of 'trust me not at all or all in all.'
 I heard the great Sir Lancelot sing it once,
 And it shall answer for me. Listen to it.

'In Love, if Love be Love, if Love be ours,
 Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal powers:
 Unfaith in aught is want of faith in all.

'It is the little rift within the lute, 20
 That by-and-by will make the music mute,
 And ever widening slowly silence all;

'The little rift within the lover's lute,
 Or little pitted speck in garner'd fruit,
 That rotting inward slowly moulders all.

'It is not worth the keeping: let it go:
 But shall it? answer, darling, answer, no.
 And trust me not at all or all in all.'

O Master, do you love my tender rhyme?"

And Merlin look'd and half believ'd her true, 30
 So tender was her voice, so fair her face,
 So sweetly gleam'd her eyes behind her tears
 Like sunlight on the plain behind a shower;
 And yet he answer'd half indignantly:

"Far other was the song that once I heard
 By this huge oak, sung nearly where we sit:
 For here we met, some ten or twelve of us,

To chase a creature that was current then
 In these wild woods, the hart with golden horns.
 It was the time when first the question rose
 About the founding of a Table Round,
 That was to be, for love of God and men
 And noble deeds, the flower of all the world
 And each incited each to noble deeds.
 And while we waited, one, the youngest of us,
 We could not keep him silent, out he flash'd,
 And into such a song, such fire for fame, 10
 Such trumpet-blowings in it, coming down
 To such a stern and iron-clashing close,
 That when he stopt we long'd to hurl together,
 And should have done it; but the beauteous beast
 Scar'd by the noise upstarted at our feet,
 And like a silver shadow slipt away
 Through the dim land; and all day long we rode
 Through the dim land against a rushing wind,
 That glorious roundel echoing in our ears,
 And chas'd the flashes of his golden horns 20
 Until they vanish'd by the fairy well
 That laughs at iron—as our warriors did—
 Where children cast their pins and nails, and cry,
 'Laugh, little well!' but touch it with a sword,
 It buzzes wildly round the point; and there
 We lost him: such a noble song was that.
 But, Vivien, when you sang me that sweet rhyme,
 I felt as though you knew this cursèd charm,
 Were proving it on me, and that I lay
 And felt them slowly ebbing, name and fame." 30

And Vivien answer'd smiling mournfully:
 "Oh, mine have ebb'd away for evermore,
 And all through following you to this wild wood,
 Because I saw you sad, to comfort you.
 Lo now, what hearts have men! they never mount
 As high as woman in her selfless mood.
 And touching fame, howe'er you scorn my song,
 Take one verse more—the lady speaks it—this:

'My name, once mine, now thine, is closelier mine,
 For fame, could fame be mine, that fame were thine,

And shame, could shame be thine, that shame were mine.
So trust me not at all or all in all.'

"Says she not well? and there is more—this rhyme
Is like the fair pearl necklace of the Queen,
That burst in dancing, and the pearls were spilt;
Some lost, some stolen, some as relics kept.
But nevermore the same two sister pearls
Ran down the silken thread to kiss each other
On her white neck. So is it with this rhyme:
It lives dispersedly in many hands, 10
And every minstrel sings it differently;
Yet is there one true line, the pearl of pearls
'Man dreams of Fame while woman wakes to Love.'
True! Love, though Love were of the grossest,
carves

A portion from the solid present, eats
And uses, careless of the rest; but Fame,
The Fame that follows death is nothing to us;
And what is Fame in life but half-disfame,
And counterchanged with darkness? you yourself
Know well that Envy calls you Devil's son, 20
And since you seem the Master of all Art,
They fain would make you Master of all vice."

And Merlin lock'd his hand in hers and said,
"I once was looking for a magic weed,
And found a fair young squire who sat alone,
Had carv'd himself a knightly shield of wood,
And then was painting on it fancied arms,
Azure, an Eagle rising or, the Sun
In dexter chief; the scroll 'I follow fame.'
And speaking not, but leaning over him, 30
I took his brush and blotted out the bird,
And made a Gardener putting in a graff,
With this for motto, 'Rather use than fame.'
You should have seen him blush; but afterwards
He made a stalwart knight. O Vivien,
For you, methinks you think you love me well;
For me, I love you somewhat; rest: and Love
Should have some rest and pleasure in himself,
Not ever be too curious for a boon,
Too prurient for a proof against the grain 40

Of him you say you love: but Fame with men,
Being but ampler means to serve mankind,
Should have small rest or pleasure in herself,
But work as vassal to the larger love,
That dwarfs the petty love of one to one.
Use gave me Fame at first, and Fame again
Increasing gave me use. Lo, there my boon!
What other? for men sought to prove me vile,
Because I wish'd to give them greater minds:
And then did Envy call me Devil's son: 10
The sick weak beast seeking to help herself
By striking at her better, miss'd, and brought
Her own claw back, and wounded her own heart.
Sweet were the days when I was all unknown,
But when my name was lifted up, the storm
Broke on the mountain, and I car'd not for it.
Right well know I that Fame is half-disfame,
Yet needs must work my work. That other fame,
To one at least, who hath not children, vague,
The cackle of the unborn about the grave, 20
I car'd not for it: a single misty star,
Which is the second in a line of stars
That seem a sword beneath a belt of three,
I never gaz'd upon it but I dreamt
Of some vast charm concluded in that star
To make fame nothing. Wherefore, if I fear,
Giving you power upon me through this charm,
That you might play me falsely, having power,
However well you think you love me now
(As sons of kings loving in pupilage 30
Have turn'd to tyrants when they came to power),
I rather dread the loss of use than fame;
If you—and not so much from wickedness,
As some wild turn of anger, or a mood
Of overstrain'd affection, it may be,
To keep me all to your own self,—or else
A sudden spurt of woman's jealousy,—
Should try this charm on whom you say you love."

And Vivien answer'd smiling as in wrath:
"Have I not sworn? I am not trusted. Good! 40
Well, hide it, hide it; I shall find it out;

And being found take heed of Vivien.
A woman and not trusted, doubtless I
Might feel some sudden turn of anger born
Of your misfaith; and your fine epithet
Is accurate too, for this full love of mine
Without the full heart back may merit well
Your term of overstrain'd. So used as I,
My daily wonder is, I love at all.
And as to woman's jealousy, oh, why not?
Oh, to what end, except a jealous one,
And one to make me jealous if I love,
Was this fair charm invented by yourself?
I well believe that all about this world
You cage a buxom captive here and there,
Closed in the four walls of a hollow tower
From which is no escape for evermore."

10

Then the great Master merrily answered her:
"Full many a love in loving youth was mine;
I needed then no charm to keep them mine
But youth and love; and that full heart of yours
Whereof you prattle, may now assure you mine;
So live uncharm'd. For those who wrought it first,
The wrist is parted from the hand that wav'd,
The feet unmortis'd from their ankle bones
Who pac'd it, ages back: but will you hear
The legend as in guerdon for your rhyme?"

20

"There liv'd a king in the most Eastern East
Less old than I, yet older, for my blood
Hath earnest in it of far springs to be.
A tawny pirate anchor'd in his port,
Whose bark had plunder'd twenty nameless isles;
And passing one, at the high peep of dawn,
He saw two cities in a thousand boats
All fighting for a woman on the sea.
And pushing his black craft among them all,
He lightly scatter'd theirs and brought her off,
With loss of half his people arrow-slain;
A maid so smooth, so white, so wonderful,
They said a light came from her when she mov'd:
And since the pirate would not yield her up,

30

40

The King impal'd him for his piracy;
Then made her Queen: but those isle-nurtur'd eyes
Wag'd such unwilling though successful war
On all the youth, they sicken'd; councils thinn'd,
And armies wan'd, for magnet-like she drew
The rustiest iron of old fighters' hearts;
And beasts themselves would worship; camels knelt
Unbidden, and the brutes of mountain back
That carry kings in castles, bow'd black knees
Of homage, ringing with their serpent hands, 10
To make her smile, her golden ankle-bells.
What wonder, being jealous, that he sent
His horns of proclamation out through all
The hundred under-kingdoms that he sway'd
To find a wizard who might teach the King
Some charm, which being wrought upon the Queen
Might keep her all his own: to such a one
He promis'd more than ever king has given,
A league of mountain full of golden mines,
A province with a hundred miles of coast, 20
A palace and a princess, all for him:
But on all those who tried and fail'd the King
Pronounc'd a dismal sentence, meaning by it
To keep the list low and pretenders back,
Or like a king, not to be trifled with—
Their heads should moulder on the city gates.
And many tried and fail'd, because the charm
Of nature in her overbore their own:
And many a wizard brow bleach'd on the walls:
And many weeks a troop of carrion crows 30
Hung like a cloud above the gateway towers."

And Vivien breaking in upon him, said:
"I sit and gather honey; yet methinks
Your tongue has tript a little: ask yourself.
The lady never made *unwilling* war
With those fine eyes; she had her pleasure in it,
And made her good man jealous with good cause.
And liv'd there neither dame nor damsel then
Wroth at a lover's loss? were all as tame,
I mean, as noble, as their Queen was fair? 40
Not one to flirt a venom at her eyes,

Or pinch a murderous dust into her drink,
 Or make her paler with a poison'd rose?
 Well, those were not our days: but did they find
 A wizard? Tell me, was he like to thee?"

She ceas'd, and made her lithe arm round his neck
 Tighten, and then drew back, and let her eyes
 Speak for her, glowing on him, like a bride's
 On her new lord, her own, the first of men.

He answer'd laughing, "Nay, not like to me.
 At last they found—his foragers for charms— 10
 A little glassy-headed hairless man,
 Who liv'd alone in a great wild on grass;
 Read but one book, and ever reading grew
 So grated down and filed away with thought,
 So lean his eyes were monstrous; while the skin
 Clung but to crate and basket, ribs and spine.
 And since he kept his mind on one sole aim,
 Nor ever touch'd fierce wine, nor tasted flesh,
 Nor own'd a sensual wish, to him the wall 20
 That sunders ghosts and shadow-casting men
 Became a crystal, and he saw them through it,
 And heard their voices talk behind the wall,
 And learnt their elemental secrets, powers
 And forces; often o'er the sun's bright eye
 Drew the vast eyelid of an inky cloud,
 And lash'd it at the base with slanting storm;
 Or in the noon of mist and driving rain,
 When the lake whiten'd and the pinewood roar'd,
 And the cairn'd mountain was a shadow, sunn'd
 The world to peace again: here was the man. 30
 And so by force they dragg'd him to the King.
 And then he taught the King to charm the Queen
 In suchwise that no man could see her more,
 Nor saw she save the King, who wrought the charm,
 Coming and going, and she lay as dead,
 And lost all use of life: but when the King
 Made proffer of the league of golden mines,
 The province with a hundred miles of coast,
 The palace and the princess, that old man

Went back to his old wild, and lived on grass,
And vanish'd and his book came down to me."

And Vivien answer'd smiling saucily:
"You have the book: the charm is written in it:
Good: take my counsel let me know it at once:
For keep it like a puzzle chest in chest,
With each chest lock'd and padlock'd thirtyfold
And whelm all this beneath as vast a mound
As after furious battle turfs the slain
On some wild down above the windy deep, 10
I yet should strike upon a sudden means
To dig, pick, open, find and read the charm:
Then, if I tried it, who should blame me then?"

And smiling as a master smiles at one
That is not of his school, nor any school
But that where blind and naked Ignorance
Delivers brawling judgments, unasham'd,
On all things all day long, he answer'd her:

"*You* read the book, my pretty Vivien!
Oh ay, it is but twenty pages long, 20
But every page having an ample marge,
And every marge enclosing in the midst
A square of text that looks a little blot,
The text no larger than the limbs of fleas;
And every square of text an awful charm,
Writ in a language that has long gone by.
So long, that mountains have arisen since
With cities on their flanks—*you* read the book!
And every margin scribbl'd, crost, and cramm'd 30
With comment, densest condensation, hard
To mind and eye; but the long sleepless nights
Of my long life have made it easy to me.
And none can read the text, not even I;
And none can read the comment but myself;
And in the comment did I find the charm.
Oh, the results are simple; a mere child
Might use it to the harm of any one,
And never could undo it: ask no more:
For though you should not prove it upon me,
But keep that oath you swore, you might, perchance, 40

Assay it on some one of the Table Round,
And all because you dream they babble of you."

And Vivien, frowning in true anger, said:
"What dare the full-fed liars say of me?
They ride abroad redressing human wrongs!
They sit with knife in meat and wine in horn!
They bound to holy vows of chastity!
Were I not woman, I could tell a tale.
But you are man, you well can understand
The shame that cannot be explain'd for shame.
Not one of all the drove should touch me: swine!" 10

Then answer'd Merlin careless of her words:
"You breathe but accusation vast and vague,
Spleen-born, I think, and proofless. If you know
Set up the charge you know, to stand or fall!"

And Vivien answer'd frowning wrathfully:
"Oh ay, what say ye to Sir Valence, him
Whose kinsman left him watcher o'er his wife
And two fair babes, and went to distant lands;
Was one year gone, and on returning found
Not two but three? there lay the reckling, one
But one hour old! What said the happy sire?
A seven-months' babe had been a truer gift.
Those twelve sweet moons confus'd his fatherhood." 20

Then answer'd Merlin, "Nay, I know the tale.
Sir Valence wedded with an outland dame:
Some cause had kept him sunder'd from his wife:
One child they had: it liv'd with her: she died:
His kinsman travelling on his own affair
Was charg'd by Valence to bring home the child.
He brought, not found it therefore: take the truth." 30

"Oh ay," said Vivien, "overtrue a tale.
What say ye then to sweet Sir Sagramore,
That ardent man? 'to pluck the flower in season,'
So says the song, 'I trow it is no treason.'
O Master, shall we call him overquick
To crop his own sweet rose before the hour?"

And Merlin answer'd, "Overquick are you
To catch a loathly plume fall'n from the wing
Of that foul bird of rapine whose whole prey
Is man's good name: he never wrong'd his bride.
I know the tale. An angry gust of wind
Puff'd out his torch among the myriad-room'd
And many-corridor'd complexities
Of Arthur's palace: then he found a door,
And darkling felt the sculptur'd ornament
That wreathen round it made it seem his own; 10
And wearied out made for the couch and slept,
A stainless man beside a stainless maid;
And either slept, nor knew of other there;
Till the high dawn piercing the royal rose
In Arthur's casement glimmer'd chastely down,
Blushing upon them blushing, and at once
He rose without a word and parted from her:
But when the thing was blaz'd about the court,
The brute world howling forc'd them into bonds,
And as it chanc'd they are happy, being pure." 20

"Oh ay," said Vivien, "that were likely too.
What say ye then to fair Sir Percivale
And of the horrid foulness that he wrought,
The saintly youth, the spotless lamb of Christ,
Or some black wether of St. Satan's fold?
What, in the precincts of the chapel-yard,
Among the knightly brasses of the graves,
And by the cold Hic Jacets of the dead!"

And Merlin answer'd careless of her charge,
"A sober man is Percivale and pure; 30
But once in life was fluster'd with new wine,
Then pac'd for coolness in the chapel-yard;
Where one of Satan's shepherdesses caught
And meant to stamp him with her master's mark;
And that he sinn'd is not believable;
For, look upon his face!—but if he sinn'd,
The sin that practice burns into the blood,
And not the one dark hour which brings remorse,
Will brand us, after, of whose fold we be:
Or else were he, the holy king, whose hymns 40

Are chanted in the minster, worse than all.
But is your spleen froth'd out, or have you more?"

And Vivien answer'd frowning yet in wrath:
"Oh ay; what say ye to Sir Lancelot, friend?
Traitor or true? that commerce with the Queen,
I ask you, is it clamour'd by the child,
Or whisper'd in the corner? do you know it?"

To which he answer'd sadly, "Yea, I know it.
Sir Lancelot went ambassador, at first,
To fetch her, and she took him for the King, 10
So fix'd her fancy on him: let them be.
But have you no one word of loyal praise
For Arthur, blameless King and stainless man?"

She answer'd with a low and chuckling laugh:
"Man! is he man at all, who knows and winks?
Sees what his fair bride is and does, and winks?
By which the good King means to blind himself,
And blinds himself and all the Table Round
To all the foulness that they work. Myself 20
Could call him (were it not for womanhood)
The pretty, popular name such manhood earns,
Could call him the main cause of all their crime;
Yea, were he not crown'd King, coward, and fool."

Then Merlin to his own heart, loathing, said:
"O true and tender! O my liege and King!
O selfless man and stainless gentleman,
Who wouldst against thine own eye-witness fain
Have all men true and leal, all women pure;
How, in the mouths of base interpreters,
From over-fineness not intelligible 30
To things with every sense as false and foul
As the poach'd filth that floods the middle street,
Is thy white blamelessness accounted blame!"

But Vivien, deeming Merlin overborne
By instance, recommenc'd, and let her tongue
Rage like a fire among the noblest names,
Polluting, and imputing her whole self,

Defaming and defacing, till she left
Not even Lancelot brave, nor Galahad clean.

Her words had issue other than she will'd.
He dragg'd his eyebrow bushes down, and made
A snowy penthouse for his hollow eyes,
And mutter'd in himself, "Tell *her* the charm!
So, if she had it, would she rail on me
To snare the next, and if she have it not
So will she rail. What did the wanton say?
'Not mount as high;' we scarce can sink as low: 10
For men at most differ as Heaven and earth,
But women, worst and best, as Heaven and Hell.
I know the Table Round, my friends of old;
All brave, and many generous, and some chaste.
I think she cloaks the wounds of loss with lies;
I do believe she tempted them and fail'd,
She is so bitter: for fine plots may fail,
Though harlots paint their talk as well as face
With colours of the heart that are not theirs.
I will not let her know: nine tithes of times 20
Face-flatterers and backbiters are the same.
And they, sweet soul, that most impute a crime
Are pronest to it, and impute themselves,
Wanting the mental range; or low desire
Not to feel lowest makes them level all;
Yea, they would pare the mountain to the plain,
To leave an equal baseness; and in this
Are harlots like the crowd, that if they find
Some stain or blemish in a name of note,
Not grieving that their greatest are so small, 30
Inflate themselves with some insane delight,
And judge all nature from her feet of clay,
Without the will to lift their eyes, and see
Her godlike head crown'd with spiritual fire,
And touching other worlds. I am weary of her."

He spoke in words part heard, in whispers part,
Half suffocated in the hoary fell
And many-winter'd fleece of throat and chin.
But Vivien, gathering somewhat of his mood,
And hearing "harlot" mutter'd twice or thrice, 40

Leapt from her session on his lap, and stood
 Stiff as a viper frozen; loathsome sight,
 How from the rosy lips of life and love
 Flash'd the bare-grinning skeleton of death!
 White was her cheek; sharp breaths of anger puff'd
 Her fairy nostril out; her hand half clench'd
 Went faltering sideways downward to her belt,
 And feeling; had she found a dagger there
 (For in a wink the false love turns to hate)
 She would have stabb'd him; but she found it not: 10
 His eye was calm, and suddenly she took
 To bitter weeping like a beaten child,
 A long, long weeping, not consolable.
 Then her false voice made way, broken with sobs:

"O crueller than was ever told in tale,
 Or sung in song! O vainly lavish'd love!
 O cruel, there was nothing wild or strange,
 Or seeming shameful—for what shame in love,
 So love be true, and not as yours is—nothing
 Poor Vivien had not done to win his trust
 Who call'd her what he call'd her—all her crime,
 All—all—the wish to prove him wholly hers." 20

She mus'd a little, and then clapt her hands
 Together with a wailing shriek, and said:
 "Stabb'd through the heart's affections to the heart!
 Seeth'd like the kid in its own mother's milk!
 Kill'd with a word worse than a life of blows!
 I thought that he was gentle, being great:
 O God, that I had lov'd a smaller man!
 I should have found in him a greater heart. 30
 Oh, I, that flattering my true passion, saw
 The knights, the court, the King, dark in your light,
 Who lov'd to make men darker than they are,
 Because of that high pleasure which I had
 To seat you sole upon my pedestal
 Of worship—I am answer'd, and henceforth
 The course of life that seem'd so flowery to me
 With you for guide and master, only you,
 Becomes the sea-cliff pathway broken short,
 And ending in a ruin—nothing left, 40

But into some low cave to crawl, and there,
If the wolf spare me, weep my life away,
Kill'd with inutterable unkindliness."

She paus'd, she turn'd away, she hung her head,
The snake of gold slid from her hair, the braid
Slipt and uncoil'd itself, she wept afresh,
And the dark wood grew darker toward the storm
In silence, while his anger slowly died
Within him, till he let his wisdom go
For ease of heart, and half believ'd her true: 10
Call'd her to shelter in the hollow oak,
"Come from the storm," and having no reply,
Gaz'd at the heaving shoulder, and the face
Hand-hidden, as for utmost grief or shame;
Then thrice essav'd, by tenderest-touching terms,
To sleek her ruff'd peace of mind, in vain.
At last she let herself be conquer'd by him,
And as the cageling newly flown returns,
The seeming-injur'd simple-hearted thing
Came to her old perch back, and settl'd there. 20
There while she sat, half falling from his knees,
Half nestl'd at his heart, and since he saw
The slow tear creep from her clos'd eyelid yet,
About her, more in kindness than in love,
The gentle wizard cast a shielding arm.
But she dislink'd herself at once and rose,
Her arms upon her breast across, and stood,
A virtuous gentlewoman deeply wrong'd,
Upright and flush'd before him: then she said:

"There must be now no passages of love 30
Betwixt us twain henceforward evermore;
Since, if I be what I am grossly call'd,
What should be granted which your own gross heart
Would reckon worth the taking? I will go.
In truth, but one thing now—better have died
Thrice than have ask'd it once—could make me
stay—

That proof of trust—so often ask'd in vain!
How justly, after that vile term of yours,
I find with grief! I might believe you then,

Who knows? once more. Lo! what was once to me
 Mere matter of the fancy, now has grown
 The vast necessity of heart and life.
 Farewell; think kindly of me, for I fear
 My fate or fault, omitting gayer youth
 For one so old, must be to love you still.
 But ere I leave you let me swear once more
 That if I schem'd against your peace in this,
 May yon just heaven, that darkens o'er me, send
 One flash, that, missing all things else, may make 10
 My scheming brain a cinder, if I lie."

Scarce had she ceas'd, when out of heaven a bolt
 (For now the storm was close above them) struck,
 Furrowing a giant oak, and javelining
 With darted spikes and splinters of the wood
 The dark earth round. He rais'd his eyes and saw
 The tree that shone white-listed through the gloom.
 But Vivien, fearing heaven had heard her oath,
 And dazzl'd by the livid-flickering fork,
 And deafen'd with the stammering cracks and claps 20
 That follow'd, flying back and crying out,
 "O Merlin, though you do not love me, save,
 Yet save me!" clung to him and hugg'd him close;
 And call'd him dear protector in her fright,
 Nor yet forgot her practice in her fright,
 But wrought upon his mood and hugg'd him close.
 The pale blood of the wizard at her touch
 Took gayer colours, like an opal warm'd.
 She blam'd herself for telling hearsay tales;
 She shook from fear, and for her fault she wept 30
 Of petulancy; she call'd him lord and liege,
 Her seer, her bard, her silver star of eve,
 Her God, her Merlin, the one passionate love
 Of her whole life; and ever overhead
 Bellow'd the tempest, and the rotten branch
 Snapt in the rushing of the river-rain
 Above them; and in change of glare and gloom
 Her eyes and neck glittering went and came;
 Till now the storm, its burst of passion spent,
 Moaning and calling out of other lands, 40
 Had left the ravag'd woodland yet once more

To peace ; and what should not have been had been,
For Merlin, overtalk'd and overworn,
Had yielded, told her all the charm, and slept.

Then, in one moment, she put forth the charm
Of woven paces and of waving hands,
And in the hollow oak he lay as dead,
And lost to life and use and name and fame.

Then crying, "I have made his glory mine,"
And shrieking out, "O fool!" the harlot leapt
Adown the forest, and the thicket clos'd
Behind her, and the forest echo'd "fool."

10

LANCELOT AND ELAINE

Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable,
Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat,
High in her chamber up a tower to the east
Guarded the sacred shield of Lancelot ;
Which first she plac'd where morning's earliest ray
Might strike it, and awake her with the gleam ;
Then fearing rust or soilure fashion'd for it
A case of silk, and braided thereupon
All the devices blazon'd on the shield
In their own tinct, and added, of her wit,
A border fantasy of branch and flower,
And yellow-throated nestling in the nest.
Nor rested thus content, but day by day,
Leaving her household and good father, climb'd
That eastern tower, and entering barr'd her door,
Stript off the case, and read the naked shield,
Now guess'd a hidden meaning in his arms,
Now made a pretty history to herself
Of every dint a sword had beaten in it,
And every scratch a lance had made upon it,
Conjecturing when and where : this cut is fresh,
That ten years back ; this dealt him at Caerlyle ;
That at Caerleon ; this at Camelot :
And ah, God's mercy, what a stroke was there !
And here a thrust that might have kill'd, but God

20

30

Broke the strong lance, and roll'd his enemy down,
And sav'd him: so she lived in fantasy.

How came the lily maid by that good shield
Of Lancelot, she that knew not ev'n his name?
He left it with her, when he rode to tilt
For the great diamond in the diamond jousts,
Which Arthur had ordain'd, and by that name
Had nam'd them, since a diamond was the prize.

For Arthur when none knew from whence he
came,
Long ere the people chose him for their King, 10
Roving the trackless realms of Lyonesse,
Had found a glen, gray boulder and black tarn.
A horror liv'd about the tarn, and clave
Like its own mists to all the mountain side:
For here two brothers, one a king, had met
And fought together; but their names were lost;
And each had slain his brother at a blow;
And down they fell, and made the glen abhorr'd:
And there they lay till all their bones were bleach'd,
And lichen'd into colour with the crags: 20
And one of these, the king, had on a crown
Of diamonds, one in front, and four aside.
And Arthur came, and labouring up the pass,
All in a misty moonshine, unawares
Had trodden that crown'd skeleton, and the skull
Brake from the nape, and from the skull the crown
Roll'd into light, and turning on its rims
Fled like a glittering rivulet to the tarn:
And down the shingly scaur he plung'd, and caught,
And set it on his head, and in his heart 30
Heard murmurs, "Lo, thou likewise shalt be King."

Thereafter, when a King, he had the gems
Pluck'd from the crown, and show'd them to his
knights,
Saying, "These jewels, whereupon I chanc'd
Divinely, are the kingdom's, not the King's—
For public use: henceforward let there be,
Once every year, a joust for one of these:

For so by nine years' proof we needs must learn
Which is our mightiest, and ourselves shall grow
In use of arms and manhood, till we drive
The heathen, who, some say, shall rule the land
Hereafter, which God hinder." Thus he spoke:
And eight years pass'd, eight jousts had been, and
still

Had Lancelot won the diamond of the year,
With purpose to present them to the Queen,
When all were won; but meaning all at once
To snare her royal fancy with a boon
Worth half her realm, had never spoken word.

10

Now for the central diamond and the last
And largest, Arthur, holding then his court
Hard on the river nigh the place which now
Is this world's hugest, let proclaim a joust
At Camelot, and when the time drew nigh
Spake (for she had been sick) to Guinevere,
"Are you so sick, my Queen, you cannot move
To these fair jousts?" "Yea, lord," she said, "you
know it."

"Then will you miss," he answer'd, "the great deeds
Of Lancelot, and his prowess in the lists—
A sight you love to look on." And the Queen
Lifted her eyes, and they dwelt languidly
On Lancelot, where he stood beside the King.
He thinking that he read her meaning there,
"Stay with me, I am sick; my love is more
Than many diamonds," yielded; and a heart
Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen
(However much he yearn'd to make complete
The tale of diamonds for his destin'd boon)
Urg'd him to speak against the truth, and say,
"Sir King, mine ancient wound is hardly whole,
And lets me from the saddle;" and the King
Glanc'd first at him, then her, and went his way.
No sooner gone than suddenly she began:

30

"To blame, my lord Sir Lancelot, much to blame!
Why go you not to these fair jousts? the knights
Are half of them our enemies, and the crowd

Will murmur, 'Lo the shameless ones, who take
 Their pastime now the trustful King is gone!' ”
 Then Lancelot vex'd at having lied in vain:
 “Are you so wise? you were not once so wise,
 My Queen, that summer, when you lov'd me first.
 Then of the crowd you took no more account
 Than of the myriad cricket of the mead,
 When its own voice clings to each blade of grass,
 And every voice is nothing. As to knights,
 Them surely can I silence with all ease. 10
 But now my loyal worship is allow'd
 Of all men: many a bard, without offence,
 Has link'd our names together in his lay,
 Lancelot, the flower of bravery, Guinevere,
 The pearl of beauty: and our knights at feast
 Have pledg'd us in this union, while the King
 Would listen smiling. How then? is there more?
 Has Arthur spoken aught? or would yourself,
 Now weary of my service and devoir,
 Henceforth be truer to your faultless lord?” 20

She broke into a little scornful laugh:
 “Arthur, my lord, Arthur, the faultless King,
 That passionate perfection, my good lord—
 But who can gaze upon the Sun in heaven?
 He never spake word of reproach to me,
 He never had a glimpse of mine untruth,
 He cares not for me: only here to-day
 There gleam'd a vague suspicion in his eyes:
 Some meddling rogue has tamper'd with him—else
 Rapt in this fancy of his Table Round, 30
 And swearing men to vows impossible,
 To make them like himself: but, friend, to me
 He is all fault who hath no fault at all:
 For who loves me must have a touch of earth;
 The low sun makes the colour: I am yours,
 Not Arthur's, as you know, save by the bond.
 And therefore hear my words: go to the jousts:
 The tiny-trumpeting gnat can break our dream
 When sweetest; and the vermin voices here
 May buzz so loud—we scorn them, but they sting.” 40

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of knights :
"And with what face, after my pretext made,
Shall I appear, O Queen, at Camelot, I
Before a King who honours his own word,
As if it were his God's?"

"Yea," said the Queen,

"A moral child without the craft to rule,
Else had he not lost me: but listen to me,
If I must find you wit: we hear it said
That men go down before your spear at a touch,
But knowing you are Lancelot; your great name, 10
This conquers: hide it therefore; go unknown:
Win! by this kiss you will: and our true King
Will then allow your pretext, O my knight,
As all for glory; for to speak him true,
You know right well, how meek soe'er he seem,
No keener hunter after glory breathes,
He loves it in his knights more than himself:
They prove to him his work: win and return."

Then got Sir Lancelot suddenly to horse,
Wroth at himself. Not willing to be known, 20
He left the barren-beaten thoroughfare,
Chose the green path that show'd the rarer foot,
And there among the solitary downs,
Full often lost in fancy, lost his way;
Till as he trac'd a faintly-shadow'd track,
That all in loops and links among the dales
Ran to the Castle of Astolat, he saw
Fir'd from the west, far on a hill, the towers.
Thither he made, and wound the gateway horn.
Then came an old, dumb, myriad-wrinkl'd man, 30
Who let him into lodging and disarm'd.
And Lancelot marvell'd at the wordless man;
And issuing found the Lord of Astolat
With two strong sons, Sir Torre and Sir Lavaine,
Moving to meet him in the castle court;
And close behind them slept the lily maid
Elaine, his daughter: mother of the house
There was not: some light jest among them rose
With laughter dying down as the great knight

Approach'd them: then the Lord of Astolat:
"Whence comest thou, my guest, and by what name
Livest between the lips? for by thy state
And presence I might guess thee chief of those,
After the King, who eat in Arthur's halls.
Him have I seen: the rest, his Table Round,
Known as they are, to me they are unknown."

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of knights:
"Known am I, and of Arthur's hall, and known,
What I by mere mischance have brought, my shield. 10
But since I go to joust as one unknown
At Camelot for the diamond, ask me not.
Hereafter you shall know me—and the shield—
I pray you lend me one, if such you have,
Blank, or at least with some device not mine."

Then said the Lord of Astolat, "Here is Torre's:
Hurt in his first tilt was my son, Sir Torre.
And so, God wot, his shield is blank enough.
His you can have." Then added plain Sir Torre,
"Yea, since I cannot use it, you may have it." 20
Here laugh'd the father, saying, "Fie, Sir Churl,
Is that an answer for a noble knight?
Allow him! but Lavaine, my younger here,
He is so full of lustihood, he will ride,
Joust for it, and win, and bring it in an hour,
And set it in this damsel's golden hair,
To make her thrice as wilful as before."

"Nay, father, nay, good father, shame me not
Before this noble knight," said young Lavaine,
"For nothing. Surely I but play'd on Torre:
He seem'd so sullen, vex'd he could not go:
A jest, no more! for, knight, the maiden dreamt
That some one put this diamond in her hand,
And that it was too slippery to be held,
And slipp'd and fell into some pool or stream,
The castle-well, belike; and then I said
That *if* I went and *if* I fought and won it
(But all was jest and joke among ourselves),
Then must she keep it safelier. All was jest.

But, father, give me leave, an if he will,
To ride to Camelot with this noble knight:
Win shall I not, but do my best to win:
Young as I am, yet would I do my best."

"So you will grace me," answer'd Lancelot,
Smiling a moment, "with your fellowship
O'er these waste downs whereon I lost myself,
Then were I glad of you as guide and friend:
And you shall win this diamond,—as I hear
It is a fair large diamond,—if you may, 10
And yield it to this maiden, if you will."
"A fair large diamond," added plain Sir Torre,
"Such be for queens, and not for simple maids."
Then she, who held her eyes upon the ground,
Elaine, and heard her name so tost about,
Flush'd slightly at the slight disparagement
Before the stranger knight, who, looking at her,
Full courtly, yet not falsely, thus return'd:
"If what is fair be but for what is fair,
And only queens are to be counted so, 20
Rash were my judgment then, who deem this maid
Might wear as fair a jewel as is on earth,
Not violating the bond of like to like."

He spoke and ceas'd: the lily maid Elaine,
Won by the mellow voice before she look'd,
Lifted her eyes, and read his lineaments.
The great and guilty love he bare the Queen,
In battle with the love he bare his lord,
Had marr'd his face, and mark'd it ere his time.
Another sinning on such heights with one, 30
The flower of all the west and all the world,
Had been the sleeker for it: but in him
His mood was often like a fiend, and rose
And drove him into wastes and solitudes
For agony, who was yet a living soul.
Marr'd as he was, he seem'd the goodliest man
That ever among ladies ate in hall,
And noblest, when she lifted up her eyes.
However marr'd, of more than twice her years,
Seam'd with an ancient sword-cut on the cheek, 40

And bruis'd and bronz'd she lifted up her eyes
And lov'd him, with that love which was her doom.

Then the great knight, the darling of the court,
Lov'd of the loveliest, into that rude hall
Stept with all grace, and not with half disdain
Hid under grace, as in a smaller time,
But kindly man moving among his kind:
Whom they with meats and vintage of their best
And talk and minstrel melody entertain'd.
And much they ask'd of court and Table Round, 10
And ever well and readily answer'd he:
But Lancelot, when they glanc'd at Guinevere,
Suddenly speaking of the wordless man,
Heard from the Baron that, ten years before,
The heathen caught and reft him of his tongue.
"He learnt and warn'd me of their fierce design
Against my house, and him they caught and maim'd;
But I, my sons, and little daughter fled
From bonds or death, and dwelt among the woods
By the great river in a boatman's hut. 20
Dull days were those, till our good Arthur broke
The Pagan yet once more on Badon hill."

"O there, great lord, doubtless," Lavaine said, rapt
By all the sweet and sudden passion of youth
Toward greatness in its elder, "you have fought.
O tell us—for we live apart—you know
Of Arthur's glorious wars." And Lancelot spoke
And answer'd him at full, as having been
With Arthur in the fight which all day long
Rang by the white mouth of the violent Glem; 30
And in the four wild battles by the shore
Of Duglas; that on Bassa; then the war
That thunder'd in and out the gloomy skirts
Of Celidon the forest; and again
By castle Gurnion, where the glorious King
Had on his cuirass worn our Lady's Head,
Carv'd of one emerald center'd in a sun
Of silver rays, that lighten'd as he breath'd;
And at Caerleon had he help'd his lord,
When the strong neighings of the wild white Horse 40

Set every gilded parapet shuddering ;
And up in Agned-Cathregonion too,
And down the waste sand-shores of Trath Treroit,
Where many a heathen fell ; "and on the mount
Of Badon I myself beheld the King
Charge at the head of all his Table Round,
And all his legions crying Christ and him,
And break them ; and I saw him, after, stand
High on a heap of slain, from spur to plume
Red as the rising sun with heathen blood, 10
And seeing me, with a great voice he cried,
'They are broken, they are broken!' for the King,
However mild he seems at home, nor cares
For triumph in our mimic wars, the jousts—
For if his own knight cast him down, he laughs
Saying, his knights are better men than he—
Yet in this heathen war the fire of God
Fills him : I never saw his like : there lives
No greater leader."

While he utter'd this,
Low to her own heart said the lily maid, 20
"Save your great self, fair lord ;" and when he fell
From talk of war to traits of pleasantry—
Being mirthful he, but in a stately kind—
She still took note that when the living smile
Died from his lips, across him came a cloud
Of melancholy severe, from which again,
Whenever in her hovering to and fro
The lily maid had striven to make him cheer,
There brake a sudden-beaming tenderness 30
Of manners and of nature : and she thought
That all was nature, all, perchance, for her.
And all night long his face before her liv'd,
As when a painter, poring on a face,
Divinely through all hindrance finds the man
Behind it, and so paints him that his face,
The shape and colour of a mind and life,
Lives for his children, ever at its best
And fullest ; so the face before her liv'd,
Dark-splendid, speaking in the silence, full
Of noble things, and held her from her sleep. 40
Till rathe she rose, half cheated in the thought

She needs must bid farewell to sweet Lavaine.
 First as in fear, step after step, she stole
 Down the long tower stairs, hesitating:
 Anon, she heard Sir Lancelot cry in the court,
 "This shield, my friend, where is it?" and Lavaine
 Pass'd inward, as she came from out the tower.
 There to his proud horse Lancelot turn'd, and
 smooth'd

The glossy shoulder, humming to himself.
 Half envious of the flattering hand, she drew
 Nearer and stood. He look'd, and more amaz'd 10
 Than if seven men had set upon him, saw
 The maiden standing in the dewy light.
 He had not dream'd she was so beautiful.
 Then came on him a sort of sacred fear,
 For silent, though he greeted her, she stood
 Rapt on his face as if it were a God's.
 Suddenly flash'd on her a wild desire,
 That he should wear her favour at the tilt.
 She brav'd a riotous heart in asking for it.
 "Fair lord, whose name I know not—noble it is, 20
 I well believe, the noblest—will you wear
 My favour at this tourney?" "Nay," said he,
 "Fair lady, since I never yet have worn
 Favour of any lady in the lists.
 Such is my wont, as those, who know me, know."
 "Yea, so," she answer'd; "then in wearing mine
 Needs must be lesser likelihood, noble lord,
 That those who know should know you." And he
 turn'd

Her counsel up and down within his mind,
 And found it true, and answer'd, "True, my child. 30
 Well, I will wear it: fetch it out to me:
 What is it?" and she told him, "A red sleeve
 Broider'd with pearls," and brought it: then he
 bound

Her token on his helmet, with a smile,
 Saying, "I never yet have done so much
 For any maiden living," and the blood
 Sprang to her face and fill'd her with delight;
 But left her all the paler, when Lavaine
 Returning brought the yet-unblazon'd shield,

His brother's; which he gave to Lancelot,
Who parted with his own to fair Elaine:
"Do me this grace, my child, to have my shield
In keeping till I come." "A grace to me,"
She answer'd, "twice to-day. I am your squire!"
Whereat Lavaine said, laughing, "Lily maid,
For fear our people call you lily maid
In earnest, let me bring your colour back;
Once, twice, and thrice: now get you hence to bed:"
So kiss'd her, and Sir Lancelot his own hand, 10
And thus they mov'd away: she stay'd a minute,
Then made a sudden step to the gate, and there—
Her bright hair blown about the serious face
Yet rosy-kindl'd with her brother's kiss—
Paus'd in the gateway, standing by the shield
In silence, while she watch'd their arms far off
Sparkle, until they dipt below the downs.
Then to her tower she climb'd, and took the shield,
There kept it, and so liv'd in fantasy.

Meanwhile the new companions pass'd away 20
Far o'er the long backs of the bushless downs,
To where Sir Lancelot knew there liv'd a knight
Not far from Camelot, now for forty years
A hermit, who had pray'd, labour'd and pray'd,
And ever labouring had scoop'd himself
In the white rock a chapel and a hall
On massive columns, like a shorecliff cave,
And cells and chambers: all were fair and dry;
The green light from the meadows underneath
Struck up and liv'd along the milky roofs; 30
And in the meadows tremulous aspen trees
And poplars made a noise of falling showers.
And thither wending there that night they bode.

But when the next day broke from underground,
And shot red fire and shadows through the cave,
They rose, heard mass, broke fast, and rode away:
Then Lancelot saying, "Hear, but hold my name
Hidden, you ride with Lancelot of the Lake,"
Abash'd Lavaine, whose instant reverence,
Dearer to true young hearts than their own praise, 40

But left him leave to stammer, "Is it indeed?"
 And after muttering, "The great Lancelot,"
 At last he got his breath and answer'd, "One,
 One have I seen—that other, our liege lord,
 The dread Pendragon, Britain's King of kings,
 Of whom the people talk mysteriously,
 He will be there—then were I stricken blind
 That minute, I might say that I had seen."

So spake Lavaine, and when they reach'd the lists
 By Camelot in the meadow, let his eyes 10
 Run through the peopled gallery which half round
 Lay like a rainbow fall'n upon the grass,
 Until they found the clear-fac'd King, who sat
 Rob'd in red samite, easily to be known,
 Since to his crown the golden dragon clung,
 And down his robe the dragon writhed in gold,
 And from the carved work behind him crept
 Two dragons gilded, sloping down to make
 Arms for his chair, while all the rest of them,
 Through knots and loops and folds innumerable, 20
 Fled ever through the woodwork, till they found
 The new design wherein they lost themselves,
 Yet with all ease, so tender was the work:
 And, in the costly canopy o'er him set,
 Blaz'd the last diamond of the nameless king.

Then Lancelot answer'd young Lavaine and said,
 "Me you call great: mine is the firmer seat,
 The truer lance: but there is many a youth
 Now crescent, who will come to all I am
 And overcome it; and in me there dwells 30
 No greatness, save it be some far-off touch
 Of greatness to know well I am not great:
 There is the man." And Lavaine gap'd upon him
 As on a thing miraculous, and anon
 The trumpets blew; and then did either side,
 They that assail'd, and they that held the lists,
 Set lance in rest, strike spur, suddenly move,
 Meet in the midst, and there so furiously
 Shock, that a man far off might well perceive,
 If any man that day were left afield, 40

The hard earth shake, and a low thunder of arms.
And Lancelot bode a little, till he saw
Which were the weaker; then he hurl'd into it
Against the stronger: little need to speak
Of Lancelot in his glory! King duke, earl,
Count, baron—whom he smote he overthrew.

But in the field were Lancelot's kith and kin,
Rang'd with the Table Round that held the lists,
Strong men, and wrathful that a stranger knight
Should do and almost overdo the deeds 10
Of Lancelot; and one said to the other, "Lo!
What is he? I do not mean the force alone—
The grace and versatility of the man!
Is it not Lancelot?" "When has Lancelot worn
Favour of any lady in the lists?
Not such his wont, as we, that know him, know."
"How then? who then?" a fury seiz'd on them,
A fiery family passion for the name
Of Lancelot, and a glory one with theirs.
They couch'd their spears and prick'd their steeds, 20
and thus,
Their plumes driv'n backward by the wind they made
In moving, all together down upon him
Bare, as a wild wave in the wide North Sea,
Green-glimmering toward the summit, bears, with all
Its stormy crests that smoke against the skies,
Down on a bark, and overbears the bark,
And him that helms it; so they overbore
Sir Lancelot and his charger, and a spear
Down-glancing lam'd the charger, and a spear
Prick'd sharply his own cuirass, and the head 30
Pierc'd through his side, and there snapp'd, and re-
main'd.

Then Sir Lavaine did well and worshipfully;
He bore a knight of old repute to the earth,
And brought his horse to Lancelot where he lay.
He up the side, sweating with agony, got,
But thought to do while he might yet endure,
And being lustily holpen by the rest,
His party—though it seem'd half-miracle

To those he fought with—drave his kith and kin,
 And all the Table Round that held the lists,
 Back to the barrier; then the heralds blew
 Proclaiming his the prize, who wore the sleeve
 Of scarlet, and the pearls; and all the knights,
 His party, cried, "Advance, and take your prize
 The diamond;" but he answer'd, "Diamond me
 No diamonds! for God's love, a little air!
 Prize me no prizes, for my prize is death!
 Hence will I, and I charge you, follow me not."

10

He spoke, and vanish'd suddenly from the field
 With young Lavaine into the poplar grove.
 There from his charger down he slid, and sat,
 Gasping to Sir Lavaine, "Draw the lance-head!"
 "Ah, my sweet lord Sir Lancelot," said Lavaine,
 "I dread me, if I draw it, you will die."
 But he, "I die already with it: draw—
 Draw,"—and Lavaine drew, and that other gave
 A marvellous great shriek and ghastly groan,
 And half his blood burst forth, and down he sank 20
 For the pure pain, and wholly swoon'd away.
 Then came the hermit out and bare him in,
 There stanch'd his wound; and there, in daily doubt
 Whether to live or die, for many a week
 Hid from the wide world's rumour by the grove
 Of poplars with their noise of falling showers,
 And ever-tremulous aspen trees, he lay.

But on that day when Lancelot fled the lists,
 His party, knights of utmost North and West,
 Lords of waste marches, kings of desolate isles, 30
 Came round their great Pendragon, saying to him,
 "Lo, Sire, our knight, through whom we won the
 day,
 Hath gone sore wounded, and hath left his prize
 Untaken, crying that his prize is death."
 "Heaven hinder," said the King, "that such an one,
 So great a knight as we have seen to-day—
 He seem'd to me another Lancelot—
 Yea, twenty times I thought him Lancelot—
 He must not pass uncared for. Gawain, rise,

My nephew, and ride forth and find the knight.
Wounded and wearied needs must he be near.
I charge you that you get at once to horse.
And, knights and kings, there breathes not one of
you

Will deem this prize of ours is rashly given:
His prowess was too wondrous. We will do him
No customary honour: since the knight
Came not to us, of us to claim the prize,
Ourselves will send it after. Wherefore take
This diamond, and deliver it, and return, 10
And bring us what he is, and how he fares,
And cease not from your quest until ye find."

So saying, from the carven flower above,
To which it made a restless heart, he took,
And gave, the diamond: then from where he sat
At Arthur's right, with smiling face arose,
With smiling face and frowning heart, a Prince
In the mid night and flourish of his May,
Gawain, surnam'd The Courteous, fair and strong,
And after Lancelot, Tristram, and Geraint 20
And Lamorack, a good knight, but therewithal
Sir Modred's brother, of a crafty house,
Nor often loyal to his word, and now
Wroth that the King's command to sally forth
In quest of whom he knew not, made him leave
The banquet, and concourse of knights and kings.

So all in wrath he got to horse and went;
While Arthur to the banquet, dark in mood,
Pass'd, thinking, "Is it Lancelot who has come
Despite the wound he spake of, all for gain 30
Of glory, and has added wound to wound,
And ridd'n away to die?" So fear'd the King,
And, after two days' tarriance there, return'd.
Then when he saw the Queen, embracing ask'd,
"Love, are you yet so sick?" "Nay, lord," she said.
"And where is Lancelot?" Then the Queen amazed,
"Was he not with you? won he not your prize?"
"Nay, but one like him." "Why, that like was he."
And when the King demanded how she knew,

Said, "Lord, no sooner had ye parted from us,
 Than Lancelot told me of a common talk
 That men went down before his spear at a touch,
 But knowing he was Lancelot; his great name
 Conquer'd; and therefore would he hide his name
 From all men, ev'n the King, and to this end
 Had made the pretext of a hindering wound,
 That he might joust unknown of all, and learn
 If his old prowess were in aught decay'd;
 And added, 'Our true Arthur, when he learns,
 Will well allow my pretext, as for gain
 Of purer glory.'"

10

Then replied the King:
 "Far lovelier in our Lancelot had it been,
 In lieu of idly dallying with the truth,
 To have trusted me as he has trusted you.
 Surely his King and most familiar friend
 Might well have kept his secret. True, indeed,
 Albeit I know my knights fantastical,
 So fine a fear in our large Lancelot
 Must needs have mov'd my laughter: now remains 20
 But little cause for laughter: his own kin—
 Ill news, my Queen, for all who love him, these!—
 His kith and kin, not knowing, set upon him;
 So that he went sore wounded from the field:
 Yet good news too; for goodly hopes are mine
 That Lancelot is no more a lonely heart.
 He wore, against his wont, upon his helm
 A sleeve of scarlet, broider'd with great pearls,
 Some gentle maiden's gift."

"Yea, lord," she said,
 "Your hopes are mine," and saying that, she chok'd, 30
 And sharply turn'd about to hide her face,
 Mov'd to her chamber, and there flung herself
 Down on the great King's couch, and writh'd upon it,
 And clench'd her fingers till they bit the palm,
 And shriek'd out "Traitor" to the unhearing wall,
 Then flash'd into wild tears, and rose again,
 And mov'd about her palace, proud and pale.

Gawain the while through all the region round
Rode with his diamond, wearied of the quest,
Touch'd at all points, except the poplar grove,
And came at last, though late, to Astolat:
Whom glittering in enamell'd arms the maid
Glanc'd at, and cried, "What news from Camelot,
lord?

What of the knight with the red sleeve?" "He won."
"I knew it," she said. "But parted from the jousts
Hurt in the side," whereat she caught her breath;
Through her own side she felt the sharp lance go; 10
Thereon she smote her hand: well-nigh she swoon'd:
And, while he gaz'd wonderingly at her, came
The Lord of Astolat out, to whom the Prince
Reported who he was, and on what quest
Sent, that he bore the prize and could not find
The victor, but had ridden wildly round
To seek him, and was wearied of the search.
To whom the Lord of Astolat, "Bide with us,
And ride no longer wildly, noble Prince!
Here was the knight, and here he left a shield; 20
This will he send or come for: furthermore
Our son is with him; we shall hear anon,
Needs must we hear." To this the courteous Prince
Accorded with his wonted courtesy,
Courtesy with a touch of traitor in it,
And stay'd; and cast his eyes on fair Elaine:
Where could he find face daintier? then her shape
From forehead down to foot, perfect—again
From foot to forehead exquisitely turn'd:
"Well—if I bide, lo! this wild flower for me!" 30
And oft they met among the garden yews,
And there he set himself to play upon her
With sallying wit, free flashes from a height
Above her, graces of the court, and songs,
Sighs, and slow smiles, and golden eloquence
And amorous adulation, till the maid
Rebell'd against it, saying to him, "Prince,
O loyal nephew of our noble King,
Why ask you not to see the shield he left,
Whence you might learn his name? Why slight 40
your King,

And lose the quest he sent you on, and prove
No surer than our falcon yesterday,
Who lost the hern we slipp'd him at, and went
To all the winds?" "Nay, by mine head," said he,
"I lose it, as we lose the lark in heaven,
O damsel, in the light of your blue eyes;
But an you will it let me see the shield."
And when the shield was brought, and Gawain saw
Sir Lancelot's azure lions, crown'd with gold,
Ramp in the field, he smote his thigh, and mock'd: 10
"Right was the King! our Lancelot! that true man!"
"And right was I," she answer'd merrily, "I,
Who dream'd my knight the greatest knight of all."
"And if *I* dream'd," said Gawain, "that you love
This greatest knight, your pardon! lo, you know it!
Speak therefore: shall I waste myself in vain?"
Full simple was her answer, "What know I?
My brethren have been all my fellowship;
And I, when often they have talk'd of love,
Wish'd it had been my mother, for they talk'd, 20
Meseem'd, of what they knew not; so myself—
I know not if I know what true love is,
But if I know, then, if I love not him,
Methinks there is none other I can love."
"Yea, by God's death," said he, "you love him well,
But would not, knew you what all others know,
And whom he loves." "So be it," cried Elaine,
And lifted her fair face and mov'd away:
But he pursu'd her, calling, "Stay a little!
One golden minute's grace! he wore your sleeve: 30
Would he break faith with one I may not name?
Must our true man change like a leaf at last?
May it be so? why then, far be it from me
To cross our mighty Lancelot in his loves!
And, damsel, for I deem you know full well
Where your great knight is hidden, let me leave
My quest with you; the diamond also: here!
For if you love, it will be sweet to give it;
And if he love, it will be sweet to have it
From your own hand; and whether he love or not, 40
A diamond is a diamond. Fare you well
A thousand times!—a thousand times farewell!

Yet, if he love, and his love hold, we two
May meet at court hereafter: there, I think,
So you will learn the courtesies of the court,
We two shall know each other."

Then he gave,

And slightly kiss'd the hand to which he gave,
The diamond, and all wearied of the quest
Leapt on his horse, and carolling as he went
A true-love ballad, lightly rode away.

Thence to the court he pass'd; there told the King
What the King knew, "Sir Lancelot is the knight." 10
And added, "Sire, my liege, so much I learnt;
But fail'd to find him, though I rode all round
The region: but I lighted on the maid
Whose sleeve he wore; she loves him; and to her,
Deeming our courtesy is the truest law,
I gave the diamond: she will render it;
For by mine head she knows his hiding-place."

The seldom-frowning King frown'd, and replied,
"Too courteous truly! you shall go no more
On quest of mine, seeing that you forget 20
Obedience is the courtesy due to kings."

He spake and parted. Wroth, but all in awe,
For twenty strokes of the blood, without a word,
Linger'd that other, staring after him;
Then shook his hair, strode off, and buzz'd abroad
About the maid of Astolat, and her love.
All ears were prick'd at once, all tongues were
loosed:

"The maid of Astolat loves Sir Lancelot,
Sir Lancelot loves the maid of Astolat."
Some read the King's face, some the Queen's, and all 30
Had marvel what the maid might be, but most
Predoom'd her as unworthy. One old dame
Came suddenly on the Queen with the sharp news.
She, that had heard the noise of it before,
But sorrowing Lancelot should have stoop'd so low,
Marr'd her friend's point with pale tranquillity.

So ran the tale like fire about the court,
 Fire in dry stubble a nine-days' wonder flar'd:
 Till ev'n the knights at banquet twice or thrice
 Forgot to drink to Lancelot and the Queen,
 And pledging Lancelot and the lily maid
 Smil'd at each other, while the Queen, who sat
 With lips severely placid, felt the knot
 Climb in her throat, and with her feet unseen
 Crush'd the wild passion out against the floor
 Beneath the banquet, where the meats became
 As wormwood, and she hated all who pledg'd.

10

But far away the maid in Astolat,
 Her guiltless rival, she that ever kept
 The one-day seen Sir Lancelot in her heart,
 Crept to her father, while he mus'd alone,
 Sat on his knee, strok'd his gray face and said,
 "Father, you call me wilful, and the fault
 Is yours who let me have my will; and now,
 Sweet father, will you let me lose my wits?"
 "Nay," said he, "surely." "Wherefore, let me
 hence,"

She answer'd, "and find out our dear Lavaine."
 "You will not lose your wits for dear Lavaine:
 Bide," answer'd he: "we needs must hear anon
 Of him, and of that other." "Ay," she said,
 "And of that other, for I needs must hence
 And find that other, wheresoe'er he be,
 And with mine own hand give his diamond to him,
 Lest I be found as faithless in the quest
 As yon proud Prince who left the quest to me.
 Sweet father, I behold him in my dreams
 Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
 Death-pale, for lack of gentle maiden's aid.
 The gentler-born the maiden, the more bound,
 My father, to be sweet and serviceable
 To noble knights in sickness, as you know,
 When these have worn their tokens: let me hence,
 I pray you." Then her father nodding said,
 "Ay, ay, the diamond: wit you well, my child,
 Right fain were I to learn this knight were whole,
 Being our greatest: yea, and you must give it—

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And sure I think this fruit is hung too high
For any mouth to gape for save a queen's—
Nay, I mean nothing: so then, get you gone,
Being so very wilful you must go."

Lightly, her suit allow'd, she slipp'd away,
And while she made her ready for her ride,
Her father's latest word humm'd in her ear,
"Being so very wilful you must go,"

And chang'd itself and echo'd in her heart,
"Being so very wilful you must die."

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But she was happy enough and shook it off,
As we shake off the bee that buzzes at us;

And in her heart she answer'd it and said,
"What matter, so I help him back to life?"

Then far away with good Sir Torre for guide
Rode o'er the long backs of the bushless downs
To Camelot, and before the city gates

Came on her brother with a happy face

Making a roan horse caper and curvet

For pleasure all about a field of flowers:

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Whom when she saw, "Lavaine," she cried,

"Lavaine,

How fares my lord Sir Lancelot?" He amaz'd,

"Torre and Elaine! why here? Sir Lancelot!

How know you my lord's name is Lancelot?"

But when the maid had told him all her tale,

Then turn'd Sir Torre, and being in his moods

Left them, and under the strange-statued gate,

Where Arthur's wars were render'd mystically,

Pass'd up the still rich city to his kin,

His own far blood, which dwelt at Camelot;

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And her, Lavaine across the poplar grove

Led to the caves: there first she saw the casque

Of Lancelot on the wall: her scarlet sleeve,

Though carv'd and cut, and half the pearls away,

Stream'd from it still; and in her heart she laugh'd,

Because he had not loos'd it from his helm,

But meant once more perchance to tourney in it.

And when they gain'd the cell in which he slept,

His battle-writhen arms and mighty hands

Lay naked on the wolfskin, and a dream

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Of dragging down his enemy made them move.
 Then she that saw him lying unsleek, unshorn,
 Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
 Utter'd a little tender dolorous cry.

The sound not wonted in a place so still
 Woke the sick knight, and while he roll'd his eyes
 Yet blank from sleep, she started to him, saying,
 "Your prize the diamond sent you by the King:"
 His eyes glisten'd: she fancied, "Is it for me?"

And when the maid had told him all the tale
 Of King and Prince, the diamond sent, the quest
 Assign'd to her not worthy of it, she knelt
 Full lowly by the corners of his bed,
 And laid the diamond in his open hand.

Her face was near, and as we kiss the child
 That does the task assign'd, he kissed her face.
 At once she slipp'd like water to the floor.

"Alas," he said, "your ride has wearied you.
 Rest must you have." "No rest for me," she said;
 "Nay, for near you, fair lord, I am at rest."

What might she mean by that? his large black eyes,
 Yet larger through his leanness, dwelt upon her,
 Till all her heart's sad secret blaz'd itself

In the heart's colours on her simple face;
 And Lancelot look'd, and was perplex'd in mind,
 And being weak in body said no more;
 But did not love the colour; woman's love,
 Save one, he not regarded, and so turn'd
 Sighing, and feign'd a sleep until he slept.

Then rose Elaine and glided through the fields,
 And pass'd beneath the wildly-sculptur'd gates
 Far up the dim rich city to her kin;
 There bode the night: but woke with dawn, and
 pass'd

Down through the dim rich city to the fields,
 Thence to the cave: so day by day she pass'd
 In either twilight ghost-like to and fro
 Gliding, and every day she tended him,
 And likewise many a night: and Lancelot
 Would, though he call'd his wound a little hurt
 Whereof he should be quickly whole, at times

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Brain-feverous in his heat and agony, seem
Uncourteous, even he: but the meek maid
Sweetly forbore him ever, being to him
Meeker than any child to a rough nurse,
Milder than any mother to a sick child,
And never woman yet, since man's first fall,
Did kindlier unto man, but her deep love
Upbore her; till the hermit, skill'd in all
The simples and the science of that time,
Told him that her fine care had sav'd his life. 10
And the sick man forgot her simple blush,
Would call her friend and sister, sweet Elaine,
Would listen for her coming, and regret
Her parting step, and held her tenderly,
And lov'd her with all love except the love
Of man and woman when they love their best,
Closest and sweetest, and had died the death
In any knightly fashion for her sake.
And peradventure had he seen her first,
She might have made this and that other world 20
Another world for the sick man; but now
The shackles of an old love straiten'd him,
His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

Yet the great knight in his mid-sickness made
Full many a holy vow and pure resolve.
These, as but born of sickness, could not live:
For when the blood ran lustier in him again,
Full often the sweet image of one face,
Making a treacherous quiet in his heart, 30
Dispers'd his resolution like a cloud.
Then if the maiden, while that ghostly grace
Beam'd on his fancy, spoke, he answer'd not,
Or short and coldly, and she knew right well
What the rough sickness meant, but what this meant
She knew not, and the sorrow dimm'd her sight.
And drave her ere her time across the fields
Far into the rich city, where alone
She murmur'd, "Vain, in vain: it cannot be.
He will not love me: how then? must I die?" 40
Then as a little helpless innocent bird,

That has but one plain passage of few notes,
Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er
For all an April morning, till the ear
Wearies to hear it, so the simple maid
Went half the night repeating, "Must I die?"
And now to right she turn'd, and now to left,
And found no ease in turning or in rest;
And "Him or death," she mutter'd, "death or him,"
Again and like a burden, "Him or death."

But when Sir Lancelot's deadly hurt was whole, 10
To Astolat returning rode the three.
There morn by morn, arraying her sweet self
In that wherein she deem'd she look'd her best,
She came before Sir Lancelot, for she thought,
"If I be loved, these are my festal robes;
If not, the victim's flowers before he fall."
And Lancelot ever press'd upon the maid
That she should ask some goodly gift of him
For her own self or hers; "and do not shun
To speak the wish most near to your true heart; 20
Such service have you done me, that I make
My will of yours, and Prince and Lord am I
In mine own land, and what I will I can."
Then like a ghost she lifted up her face,
But like a ghost without the power to speak.
And Lancelot saw that she withheld her wish,
And bode among them yet a little space
Till he should learn it; and one morn it chanc'd
He found her in among the garden yews,
And said, "Delay no longer, speak your wish, 30
Seeing I must go to-day:" then out she brake:
"Going? and we shall never see you more.
And I must die for want of one bold word."
"Speak: that I live to hear," he said, "is yours."
Then suddenly and passionately she spoke:
"I have gone mad. I love you: let me die."
"Ah, sister," answer'd Lancelot, "what is this?"
And innocently extending her white arms,
"Your love," she said, "your love—to be your wife."
And Lancelot answer'd, "Had I chosen to wed, 40
I had been wedded earlier, sweet Elaine:

But now there never will be wife of mine."
 "No, no," she cried, "I care not to be wife,
 But to be with you still, to see your face,
 To serve you, and to follow you through the world."
 And Lancelot answer'd, "Nay, the world, the world,
 All ear and eye, with such a stupid heart
 To interpret ear and eye, and such a tongue
 To blare its own interpretation—nay,
 Full ill then should I quit your brother's love,
 And your good father's kindness." And she said, 10
 "Not to be with you, not to see your face—
 Alas for me then, my good days are done."
 "Nay, noble maid," he answer'd, "ten times nay!
 This is not love: but love's first flash in youth,
 Most common: yea, I know it of mine own self:
 And you yourself will smile at your own self
 Hereafter, when you yield your flower of life
 To one more fitly yours, not thrice your age:
 And then will I, for true you are and sweet
 Beyond mine old belief in womanhood, 20
 More specially should your good knight be poor,
 Endow you with broad land and territory
 Even to the half my realm beyond the seas,
 So that would make you happy: furthermore,
 Ev'n to the death, as though you were my blood,
 In all your quarrels will I be your knight.
 This will I do, dear damsel, for your sake,
 And more than this I cannot."

While he spoke
 She neither blush'd nor shook, but deathly pale
 Stood grasping what was nearest, then replied: 30
 "Of all this will I nothing;" and so fell,
 And thus they bore her swooning to her tower.

Then spake, to whom through those black walls of
 yew
 Their talk had pierc'd, her father: "Ay, a flash,
 I fear me, that will strike my blossom dead.
 Too courteous are you, fair Lord Lancelot.
 I pray you, use some rough discourtesy
 To blunt or break her passion."

Lancelot said,
 "That were against me: what I can I will;"
 And there that day remain'd, and toward even
 Sent for his shield: full meekly rose the maid,
 Stripp'd off the case, and gave the naked shield;
 Then, when she heard his horse upon the stones,
 Unclasping flung the casement back, and look'd
 Down on his helm, from which her sleeve had gone.
 And Lancelot knew the little clinking sound;
 And she by tact of love was well aware
 That Lancelot knew that she was looking at him
 And yet he glanc'd not up, nor wav'd his hand,
 Nor bade farewell, but sadly rode away.
 This was the one discourtesy that he used.

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So in her tower alone the maiden sat:
 His very shield was gone; only the case,
 Her own poor work, her empty labour, left.
 But still she heard him, still his picture form'd
 And grew between her and the pictur'd wall.
 Then came her father, saying in low tones,
 "Have comfort," whom she greeted quietly.
 Then came her brethren saying, "Peace to thee,
 Sweet sister," whom she answer'd with all calm.
 But when they left her to herself again,
 Death, like a friend's voice from a distant field
 Approaching through the darkness, call'd; the owls
 Wailing had power upon her, and she mix'd
 Her fancies with the sallow-rifted glooms
 Of evening, and the moanings of the wind.

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And in those days she made a little song,
 And call'd her song "The Song of Love and Death,"
 And sang it: sweetly could she make and sing.

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"Sweet is true love though given in vain, in vain;
 And sweet is death who puts an end to pain:
 I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

"Love, art thou sweet? then bitter death must be:
 Love, thou art bitter; sweet is death to me.
 O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die.

"Sweet love, that seems not made to fade away,
Sweet death, that seems to make us loveless clay,
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

"I fain would follow love, if that could be;
I needs must follow death, who calls for me;
Call and I follow, I follow! let me die."

High with the last line scal'd her voice, and this,
All in a fiery dawning wild with wind
That shook her tower, the brothers heard, and
thought
With shuddering, "Hark the Phantom of the house 10
That ever shrieks before a death," and call'd
The father, and all three in hurry and fear
Ran to her, and lo! the blood-red light of dawn
Flar'd on her face, she shrilling, "Let me die!"

As when we dwell upon a word we know,
Repeating, till the word we know so well
Becomes a wonder, and we know not why,
So dwelt the father on her face, and thought,
"Is this Elaine?" till back the maiden fell,
Then gave a languid hand to each, and lay, 20
Speaking a still good-morrow with her eyes.
At last she said, "Sweet brothers, yesternight
I seem'd a curious little maid again,
As happy as when we dwelt among the woods,
And when you used to take me with the flood
Up the great river in the boatman's boat.
Only you would not pass beyond the cape
That has the poplar on it: there you fix'd
Your limit, oft returning with the tide.
And yet I cried because you would not pass 30
Beyond it, and far up the shining flood
Until we found the palace of the King.
And yet you would not; but this night I dream'd
That I was all alone upon the flood,
And then I said, 'Now shall I have my will:'
And there I woke, but still the wish remain'd.
So let me hence, that I may pass at last
Beyond the poplar and far up the flood,

Until I find the palace of the King.
 There will I enter in among them all,
 And no man there will dare to mock at me;
 But there the fine Gawain will wonder at me,
 And there the great Sir Lancelot muse at me—
 Gawain, who bade a thousand farewells to me;
 Lancelot, who coldly went, nor bade me one:
 And there the King will know me and my love,
 And there the Queen herself will pity me,
 And all the gentle court will welcome me,
 And after my long voyage I shall rest!"

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"Peace," said her father, "O my child, you seem
 Light-headed, for what force is yours to go
 So far, being sick? and wherefore would you look
 On this proud fellow again, who scorns us all?"

Then the rough Torre began to heave and move,
 And bluster into stormy sobs and say,
 "I never loved him: an I meet with him,
 I care not howsoever great he be,
 Then will I strike at him and strike him down,
 Give me good fortune, I will strike him dead,
 For this discomfort he hath done the house."

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To which the gentle sister made reply,
 "Fret not yourself, dear brother, nor be wroth,
 Seeing it is no more Sir Lancelot's fault
 Not to love me, than it is mine to love
 Him of all men who seems to me the highest."

"Highest?" the father answer'd, echoing,
 "highest?"

(He meant to break the passion in her); "nay,
 Daughter, I know not what you call the highest;
 But this I know, for all the people know it,
 He loves the Queen, and in an open shame:
 And she returns his love in open shame;
 If this be high, what is it to be low?"

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Then spake the lily maid of Astolat:
 "Sweet father, all too faint and sick am I

For anger: these are slanders: never yet
Was noble man but made ignoble talk.
He makes no friend who never made a foe.
But now it is my glory to have lov'd
One peerless, without stain: so let me pass,
My father, howsoe'er I seem to you,
Not all unhappy, having lov'd God's best
And greatest, though my love had no return:
Yet, seeing you desire your child to live,
Thanks, but you work against your own desire; 10
For if I could believe the things you say,
I should but die the sooner; wherefore cease,
Sweet father, and bid call the ghostly man
Hither, and let me shrive me clean, and die."

So when the ghostly man had come and gone,
She with a face, bright as for sin forgiven,
Besought Lavaine to write as she devis'd
A letter, word for word; and when he ask'd,
"Is it for Lancelot, is it for my dear lord?
Then will I bear it gladly," she replied, 20
"For Lancelot and the Queen and all the world,
But I myself must bear it." Then he wrote
The letter she devis'd; which being writ
And folded, "O sweet father, tender and true,
Deny me not," she said—"you never yet
Denied my fancies—this, however strange,
My latest: lay the letter in my hand
A little ere I die, and close the hand
Upon it; I shall guard it even in death. 30
And when the heat is gone from out my heart,
Then take the little bed on which I died
For Lancelot's love, and deck it like the Queen's
For richness, and me also like the Queen
In all I have of rich, and lay me on it.
And let there be prepar'd a chariot-bier
To take me to the river, and a barge
Be ready on the river, cloth'd in black.
I go in state to court, to meet the Queen.
There surely I shall speak for mine own self,
And none of you can speak for me so well. 40
And therefore let our dumb old man alone

Go with me, he can steer and row, and he
Will guide me to that palace, to the doors."

She ceas'd: her father promis'd; whereupon
She grew so cheerful that they deem'd her death
Was rather in the fantasy than the blood.
But ten slow mornings pass'd, and on the eleventh
Her father laid the letter in her hand,
And clos'd the hand upon it, and she died.
So that day there was dole in Astolat.

But when the next sun brake from underground, 10
Then, those two brethren slowly with bent brows
Accompanying, the sad chariot-bier
Pass'd like a shadow through the field, that shone
Full-summer, to that stream whereon the barge,
Pall'd all its length in blackest samite, lay.
There sat the lifelong creature of the house,
Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,
Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face.
So those two brethren from the chariot took
And on the black decks laid her in her bed, 20
Set in her hand a lily, o'er her hung
The silken case with braided blazonings,
And kiss'd her quiet brows, and saying to her,
"Sister, farewell for ever," and again
"Farewell, sweet sister," parted all in tears.
Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the dead,
Steer'd by the dumb, went upward with the flood—
In her right hand the lily, in her left
The letter—all her bright hair streaming down—
And all the coverlid was cloth of gold 30
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in white
All but her face, and that clear-featur'd face
Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead,
But fast asleep, and lay as though she smil'd.

That day Sir Lancelot at the palace crav'd
Audience of Guinevere, to give at last
The price of half a realm, his costly gift,
Hard-won and hardly won with bruise and blow,
With deaths of others, and almost his own.

The nine-years-fought-for diamonds: for he saw
One of her house, and sent him to the Queen
Bearing his wish, whereto the Queen agreed
With such and so unmov'd a majesty
She might have seem'd her statue, but that he,
Low-drooping till he well-nigh kiss'd her feet
For loyal awe, saw with a sidelong eye
The shadow of a piece of pointed lace,
In the Queen's shadow, vibrate on the walls,
And parted, laughing in his courtly heart.

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All in an oriel on the summer side,
Vine-clad, of Arthur's palace toward the stream,
They met, and Lancelot kneeling utter'd, "Queen,
Lady, my liege, in whom I have my joy,
Take, what I had not won except for you,
These jewels, and make me happy, making them
An armlet for the roundest arm on earth,
Or necklace for a neck to which the swan's
Is tawnier than her cygnet's: these are words:
Your beauty is your beauty, and I sin
In speaking, yet oh grant my worship of it
Words, as we grant grief tears. Such sin in words
Perchance, we both can pardon: but, my Queen,
I hear of rumours flying through your court.
Our bond, as not the bond of man and wife,
Should have in it an absoluter trust
To make up that defect: let rumours be:
When did not rumours fly? these, as I trust
That you trust me in your own nobleness,
I may not well believe that you believe."

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While thus he spoke, half turn'd away, the Queen
Brake from the vast oriel-embowering vine
Leaf after leaf, and tore, and cast them off,
Till all the place whereon she stood was green;
Then, when he ceas'd, in one cold passive hand
Receiv'd at once and laid aside the gems
There on a table near her, and replied:

"It may be I am quicker of belief
Than you believe me, Lancelot of the Lake.

Our bond is not the bond of man and wife.
 This good is in it, whatsoe'er of ill,
 It can be broken easier. I for you
 This many a year have done despite and wrong
 To one whom ever in my heart of hearts
 I did acknowledge nobler. What are these?
 Diamonds for me! they had been thrice their worth
 Being your gift, had you not lost your own.
 To loyal hearts the value of all gifts
 Must vary as the giver's. Not for me!
 For her! for your new fancy. Only this
 Grant me, I pray you: have your joys apart.
 I doubt not that however chang'd, you keep
 So much of what is graceful: and myself
 Would shun to break those bounds of courtesy
 In which as Arthur's Queen I move and rule;
 So cannot speak my mind. An end to this!
 A strange one! yet I take it with Amen.
 So pray you, add my diamonds to her pearls;
 Deck her with these; tell her she shines me down: 10
 An armlet for an arm to which the Queen's
 Is haggard, or a necklace for a neck
 Oh as much fairer—as a faith once fair
 Was richer than these diamonds—hers not mine—
 Nay, by the mother of our Lord Himself,
 Or hers or mine, mine now to work my will—
 She shall not have them."

Saying which she seiz'd,
 And, through the casement standing wide for heat,
 Flung them, and down they flash'd, and smote the
 stream.

Then from the smitten surface flash'd, as it were, 30
 Diamonds to meet them, and they pass'd away.
 Then while Sir Lancelot leant, in half disgust
 At love, life, all things, on the window ledge,
 Close underneath his eyes, and right across
 Where these had fallen, slowly pass'd the barge
 Whereon the lily maid of Astolat
 Lay smiling, like a star in blackest night.

But the wild Queen, who saw not, burst away
To weep and wail in secret ; and the barge,
On to the palace-doorway sliding, paus'd.
There two stood arm'd, and kept the door ; to whom,
All up the marble stair, tier over tier,
Were added mouths that gap'd, and eyes that ask'd,
"What is it?" but the oarsman's haggard face,
As hard and still as is the face that men
Shape to their fancy's eye from broken rocks
On some cliff-side, appall'd them, and they said, 10
"He is enchanted, cannot speak—and she,
Look how she sleeps—the Fairy Queen, so fair!
Yea, but how pale! what are they? flesh and blood?
Or come to take the King to Fairyland?
For some do hold our Arthur cannot die,
But that he passes into Fairyland."

While thus they babbl'd of the King, the King
Came girt with knights: then turn'd the tongueless
man

From the half-face to the full eye, and rose
And pointed to the damsel, and the doors. 20
So Arthur bade the meek Sir Percivale
And pure Sir Galahad to uplift the maid;
And reverently they bore her into hall.
Then came the fine Gawain and wonder'd at her,
And Lancelot later came and mus'd at her,
And last the Queen herself, and pitied her:
But Arthur spied the letter in her hand,
Stoop'd, took, brake seal, and read it; this was all:

"Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the Lake,
I, sometime call'd the maid of Astolat, 30
Come, for you left me taking no farewell,
Hither, to take my last farewell of you.
I lov'd you, and my love had no return,
And therefore my true love has been my death.
And therefore to our Lady Guinevere,
And to all other ladies, I make moan.
Pray for my soul, and yield me burial.
Pray for my soul thou too, Sir Lancelot,
As thou art a knight peerless."

Thus he read ;

And ever in the reading, lords and dames
 Wept, looking often from his face who read
 To hers which lay so silent, and at times,
 So touch'd were they, half thinking that her lips,
 Who had devis'd the letter, mov'd again.

Then freely spoke Sir Lancelot to them all :
 "My lord liege Arthur, and all ye that hear,
 Know that for this most gentle maiden's death
 Right heavy am I ; for good she was and true,
 But lov'd me with a love beyond all love
 In women, whomsoever I have known.
 Yet to be lov'd makes not to love again ;
 Not at my years, however it hold in youth.
 I swear by truth and knighthood that I gave
 No cause, not willingly, for such a love :
 To this I call my friends in testimony,
 Her brethren, and her father, who himself
 Besought me to be plain and blunt, and use,
 To break her passion, some discourtesy
 Against my nature : what I could, I did.
 I left her and I bade her no farewell ;
 Though, had I dreamt the damsel would have died,
 I might have put my wits to some rough use,
 And help'd her from herself."

Then said the Queen

(Sea was her wrath, yet working after storm),
 "You might at least have done her so much grace,
 Fair lord, as would have help'd her from her death."
 He rais'd his head, their eyes met and hers fell,
 He adding,

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"Queen, she would not be content
 Save that I wedded her, which could not be.
 Then might she follow me through the world, she
 ask'd ;
 It could not be. I told her that her love
 Was but the flash of youth, would darken down
 To rise hereafter in a stiller flame
 Toward one more worthy of her—then would I,

More specially were he, she wedded, poor,
Estate them with large land and territory
In mine own realm beyond the narrow seas,
To keep them in all joyance: more than this
I could not; this she would not, and she died."

He pausing, Arthur answer'd, "O my knight,
It will be to your worship, as my knight,
And mine, as head of all our Table Round,
To see that she be buried worshipfully."

So toward that shrine which then in all the realm 10
Was richest, Arthur leading, slowly went
The marshall'd Order of their Table Round,
And Lancelot sad beyond his wont, to see
The maiden buried, not as one unknown,
Nor meanly, but with gorgeous obsequies,
And mass, and rolling music, like a queen.
And when the knights had laid her comely head
Low in the dust of half-forgotten kings,
Then Arthur spake among them, "Let her tomb
Be costly, and her image thereupon, 20
And let the shield of Lancelot at her feet
Be carven and her lily in her hand.
And let the story of her dolorous voyage
For all true hearts be blazon'd on her tomb
In letters gold and azure!" which was wrought
Thereafter; but when now the lords and dames
And people, from the high door streaming, brake
Disorderly, as homeward each, the Queen,
Who mark'd Sir Lancelot where he mov'd apart,
Drew near, and sigh'd in passing, "Lancelot, 30
Forgive me; mine was jealousy in love."
He answer'd with his eyes upon the ground,
"That is love's curse; pass on, my Queen, forgiven."
But Arthur, who beheld his cloudy brows,
Approach'd him, and with full affection flung
One arm about his neck, and spake and said:

"Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom I have
Most love and most affiance, for I know
What thou hast been in battle by my side,

And many a time have watch'd thee at the tilt
Strike down the lusty and long-practis'd knight,
And let the younger and unskill'd go by
To win his honour and to make his name,
And lov'd thy courtesies and thee, a man
Made to be lov'd; but now I would to God,
For the wild people say wild things of thee,
Thou couldst have lov'd this maiden, shap'd, it seems,
By God for thee alone, and from her face,
If one may judge the living by the dead,
Delicately pure and marvellously fair,
Who might have brought thee, now a lonely man
Wifeless and heirless, noble issue, sons
Born to the glory of thy name and fame.
My knight, the great Sir Lancelot of the Lake." 10

Then answer'd Lancelot, "Fair she was, my King,
Pure, as you ever wish your knights to be.
To doubt her fairness were to want an eye,
To doubt her pureness were to want a heart—
Yea, to be lov'd, if what is worthy love
Could bind him, but free love will not be bound." 20

"Free love, so bound, were freest," said the King.
"Let love be free; free love is for the best:
And, after heaven, on our dull side of death,
What should be best, if not so pure a love
Cloth'd in so pure a loveliness? yet thee
She fail'd to bind, though being, as I think,
Unbound as yet, and gentle, as I know."

And Lancelot answer'd nothing, but he went,
And at the inrunning of a little brook
Sat by the river in a cove, and watch'd
The high reed wave, and lifted up his eyes
And saw the barge that brought her moving down,
Far off, a blot upon the stream, and said
Low in himself, "Ah, simple heart and sweet,
You lov'd me, damsel, surely with a love
Far tenderer than my Queen's. Pray for thy soul?
Ay, that will I. Farewell too—now at last—
Farewell, fair lily. 'Jealousy in love?' 30

Not rather dead love's harsh heir, jealous pride?
Queen, if I grant the jealousy as of love,
May not your crescent fear for name and fame
Speak, as it waxes, of a love that wanes?
Why did the King dwell on my name to me?
Mine own name shames me, seeming a reproach,
Lancelot, whom the Lady of the Lake
Stole from his mother—as the story goes—
She chanted snatches of mysterious song
Heard on the winding waters, eve and morn 10
She kiss'd me, saying, 'Thou art fair, my child,
As a king's son,' and often in her arms
She bare me, pacing on the dusky mere.
Would she had drown'd me in it, where'er it be!
For what am I? what profits me my name
Of greatest knight? I fought for it, and have it:
Pleasure to have it, none; to lose it, pain;
Now grown a part of me: but what use in it?
To make men worse by making my sin known?
Or sin seem less, the sinner seeming great? 20
Alas for Arthur's greatest knight, a man
Not after Arthur's heart! I needs must break
These bonds that so defame me: not without
She wills it. Would I, if she will'd it? nay,
Who knows? but if I would not, then may God
I pray Him, send a sudden Angel down
To seize me by the hair and bear me far,
And fling me deep in that forgotten mere,
Among the tumbl'd fragments of the hills."

So groan'd Sir Lancelot in remorseful pain, 30
Not knowing he should die a holy man.

THE HOLY GRAIL

From noiseful arms, and acts of prowess done
In tournament or tilt, Sir Percivale,
Whom Arthur and his knighthood call'd The Pure,
Had pass'd into the silent life of prayer,
Praise, fast, and alms; and leaving for the cowl
The helmet in an abbey far away
From Camelot, there, and not long after, died.

And one, a fellow-monk among the rest,
Ambrosius, loved him much beyond the rest,
And honour'd him, and wrought into his heart
A way by love that waken'd love within,
To answer that which came: and as they sat
Beneath a world-old yew-tree, darkening half
The cloisters, on a gustful April morn
That puff'd the swaying branches into smoke
Above them, ere the summer when he died,
The monk Ambrosius question'd Percivale:

10

"O brother, I have seen this yew-tree smoke,
Spring after spring, for half a hundred years:
For never have I known the world without,
Nor ever stray'd beyond the pale: but thee,
When thou first camest—such a courtesy
Spake thro' the limbs and in the voice—I knew
For one of those who eat in Arthur's hall;
For good ye are and bad, and like to coins,
Some true, some light, but every one of you
Stamp'd with the image of the King; and now
Tell me, what drove thee from the Table Round,
My brother? was it earthly passion crost?"

20

"Nay," said the knight; "for no such passion mine.
But the sweet vision of the Holy Grail
Drove me from all vainglories, rivalries,
And earthly heats that spring and sparkle out
Among us in the jousts, while women watch
Who wins, who falls; and waste the spiritual
strength
Within us, better offer'd up to Heaven."

To whom the monk: "The Holy Grail!—I trust 30
We are green in Heaven's eyes; but here too much
We moulder—as to things without I mean—
Yet one of your own knights, a guest of ours,
Told us of this in our refectory,
But spake with such a sadness and so low
We heard not half of what he said. What is it?
The phantom of a cup that comes and goes?"

“Nay, monk! what phantom?” answer’d Percivale.
“The cup, the cup itself, from which our Lord
Drank at the last sad supper with his own.
This, from the blessed land of Aromat—
After the day of darkness, when the dead
Went wandering o’er Moriah—the good saint
Arimathæan Joseph, journeying brought
To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn
Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our Lord.
And there awhile it bode; and if a man
Could touch or see it, he was heal’d at once,
By faith, of all his ills. But then the times
Grew to such evil that the holy cup
Was caught away to Heaven, and disappear’d.”

10

To whom the monk: “From our old books I know
That Joseph came of old to Glastonbury,
And there the heathen Prince, Arviragus,
Gave him an isle of marsh whereon to build;
And there he built with wattles from the marsh
A little lonely church in days of yore,
For so they say, these books of ours, but seem
Mute of this miracle, far as I have read.
But who first saw the holy thing to-day?”

20

“A woman,” answer’d Percivale, “a nun,
And one no further off in blood from me
Than sister; and if ever holy maid
With knees of adoration wore the stone,
A holy maid; tho’ never maiden glow’d,
But that was in her earlier maidenhood,
With such a fervent flame of human love,
Which being rudely blunted, glanced and shot
Only to holy things; to prayer and praise
She gave herself, to fast and alms. And yet,
Nun as she was, the scandal of the Court,
Sin against Arthur and the Table Round,
And the strange sound of an adulterous race,
Across the iron grating of her cell
Beat, and she pray’d and fasted all the more.

30

“And he to whom she told her sins, or what
Her all but utter whiteness held for sin,
A man wellnigh a hundred winters old,
Spake often with her of the Holy Grail,
A legend handed down thro’ five or six,
And each of these a hundred winters old,
From our Lord’s time. And when King Arthur
made

His Table Round, and all men’s hearts became
Clean for a season, surely he had thought
That now the Holy Grail would come again; 10
But sin broke out. Ah, Christ, that it would come,
And heal the world of all their wickedness!
‘O Father!’ ask’d the maiden, ‘might it come
To me by prayer and fasting?’ ‘Nay,’ said he,
‘I know not, for thy heart is pure as snow.’
And so she pray’d and fasted, till the sun
Shone, and the wind blew, thro’ her, and I thought
She might have risen and floated when I saw her.

“For on a day she sent to speak with me.
And when she came to speak, behold her eyes 20
Beyond my knowing of them, beautiful,
Beyond all knowing of them, wonderful,
Beautiful in the light of holiness.
And ‘O my brother Percivale,’ she said.
‘Sweet brother, I have seen the Holy Grail:
For, waked at dead of night, I heard a sound
As of a silver horn from o’er the hills
Blown, and I thought, “It is not Arthur’s use
To hunt by moonlight;” and the slender sound
As from a distance beyond distance grew 30
Coming upon me—O never harp nor horn,
Nor aught we blow with breath, or touch with hand,
Was like that music as it came; and then
Stream’d thro’ my cell a cold and silver beam,
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail,
Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive,
Till all the white walls of my cell were dyed
With rosy colours leaping on the wall;
And then the music faded, and the Grail
Past, and the beam decay’d, and from the walls 40

The rosy quiverings died into the night.
So now the Holy Thing is here again
Among us, brother, fast thou too and pray,
And tell thy brother knights to fast and pray,
That so perchance the vision may be seen
By thee and those, and all the world be heal'd.'

"Then leaving the pale nun, I spake of this
To all men; and myself fasted and pray'd
Always, and many among us many a week
Fasted and pray'd even to the uttermost, 10
Expectant of the wonder that would be.

"And one there was among us, ever moved
Among us in white armour, Galahad.
'God make thee good as thou art beautiful,'
Said Arthur, when he dubb'd him knight; and none,
In so young youth, was ever made a knight
Till Galahad; and this Galahad, when he heard
My sister's vision, fill'd me with amaze;
His eyes became so like her own, they seem'd
Hers, and himself her brother more than I. 20

"Sister or brother none had he; but some
Call'd him a son of Lancelot, and some said
Begotten by enchantment—chatterers they,
Like birds of passage piping up and down,
That gape for flies—we know not whence they come;
For when was Lancelot wanderingly lewd?

"But she, the wan sweet maiden, shore away
Clean from her forehead all that wealth of hair
Which made a silken mat-work for her feet;
And out of this she plaited broad and long 30
A strong sword-belt, and wove with silver thread
And crimson in the belt a strange device,
A crimson grail within a silver beam;
And saw the bright boy-knight, and bound it on him.
Saying, 'My knight, my love, my knight of heaven,
O thou, my love, whose love is one with mine.
I, maiden, round thee, maiden, bind my belt.
Go forth, for thou shalt see what I have seen,

And break thro' all, till one will crown thee king
Far in the spiritual city : ' and as she spake
She sent the deathless passion in her eyes
Thro' him, and made him hers, and laid her mind
On him, and he believed in her belief.

"Then came a year of miracle : O brother,
In our great hall there stood a vacant chair,
Fashion'd by Merlin ere he past away,
And carven with strange figures ; and in and out
The figures, like a serpent, ran a scroll
Of letters in a tongue no man could read.
And Merlin call'd it 'The Siege perilous,'
Perilous for good and ill ; 'for there,' he said,
'No man could sit but he should lose himself :'
And once by misadvertence Merlin sat
In his own chair, and so was lost ; but he,
Galahad, when he heard of Merlin's doom,
Cried, 'If I lose myself, I save myself !'

10

"Then on a summer night it came to pass,
While the great banquet lay along the hall,
That Galahad would sit down in Merlin's chair.

20

"And all at once, as there we sat, we heard
A cracking and a riving of the roofs,
And rending, and a blast, and overhead
Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry.
And in the blast there smote along the hall
A beam of light seven times more clear than day :
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail
All over cover'd with a luminous cloud,
And none might see who bare it, and it past.
But every knight beheld his fellow's face
As in a glory, and all the knights arose,
And staring each at other like dumb men
Stood, till I found a voice and sware a vow.

30

"I sware a vow before them all, that I,
Because I had not seen the Grail, would ride
A twelvemonth and a day in quest of it,
Until I found and saw it, as the nun

My sister saw it; and Galahad sware the vow,
And good Sir Bors, our Lancelot's cousin, sware,
And Lancelot sware, and many among the knights,
And Gawain sware, and louder than the rest."

Then spake the monk Ambrosius, asking him,
"What said the King? Did Arthur take the vow?"

"Nay, for my lord," said Percivale, "the King,
Was not in hall: for early that same day,
Scaped thro' a cavern from a bandit hold,
An outraged maiden sprang into the hall 10
Crying on help: for all her shining hair
Was smear'd with earth, and either milky arm
Red-rent with hooks of bramble, and all she wore
Torn as a sail that leaves the rope is torn
In tempest: so the King arose and went
To smoke the scandalous hive of those wild bees
That made such honey in his realm. Howbeit
Some little of this marvel he too saw,
Returning o'er the plain that then began 20
To darken under Camelot; whence the King
Look'd up, calling aloud, 'Lo, there! the roofs
Of our great hall are roll'd in thunder-smoke!
Pray Heaven, they be not smitten by the bolt.'
For dear to Arthur was that hall of ours,
As having there so oft with all his knights
Feasted, and as the stateliest under heaven.

"O brother, had you known our mighty hall,
Which Merlin built for Arthur long ago!
For all the sacred mount of Camelot,
And all the dim rich city, roof by roof, 30
Tower after tower, spire beyond spire,
By grove, and garden-lawn, and rushing brook,
Climbs to the mighty hall that Merlin built.
And four great zones of sculpture, set betwixt
With many a mystic symbol, gird the hall:
And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,
And in the second men are slaying beasts,
And on the third are warriors, perfect men,
And on the fourth are men with growing wings,

And over all one statue in the mould
 Of Arthur, made by Merlin, with a crown,
 And peak'd wings pointed to the Northern Star.
 And eastward fronts the statue, and the crown
 And both the wings are made of gold, and flame
 At sunrise till the people in far fields,
 Wasted so often by the heathen hordes,
 Behold it, crying, 'We have still a King.'

"And, brother, had you known our hall within,
 Broader and higher than any in all the lands! 10
 Where twelve great windows blazon Arthur's wars,
 And all the light that falls upon the board
 Streams thro' the twelve great battles of our King.
 Nay, one there is, and at the eastern end,
 Wealthy with wandering lines of mount and mere,
 Where Arthur finds the brand Excalibur.
 And also one to the west, and counter to it,
 And blank: and who shall blazon it? when and
 how?—

O there, perchance, when all our wars are done,
 The brand Excalibur will be cast away. 20

"So to this hall full quickly rode the King,
 In horror lest the work by Merlin wrought,
 Dreamlike, should on the sudden vanish, wrapt
 In unremorseful folds of rolling fire.
 And in he rode, and up I glanced, and saw
 The golden dragon sparkling over all:
 And many of those who burnt the hold, their arms
 Hack'd, and their foreheads grimed with smoke, and
 sear'd

Follow'd, and in among bright faces, ours,
 Full of the vision, prest: and then the King 30
 Spake to me, being nearest, 'Percivale,'
 (Because the hall was all in tumult—some
 Vowing, and some protesting), 'what is this?'

"O brother, when I told him what had chanced,
 My sister's vision, and the rest, his face
 Darken'd, as I have seen it more than once,
 When some brave deed seem'd to be done in vain,

Darken; and 'Woe is me, my knights,' he cried,
 'Had I been here, ye had not sworn the vow.'
 Bold was mine answer, 'Had thyself been here,
 My King, thou wouldst have sworn.' 'Yea, yea,'
 said he,
 'Art thou so bold and hast not seen the Grail?'

"'Nay, lord, I heard the sound, I saw the light,
 But since I did not see the Holy Thing,
 I swear a vow to follow it till I saw.'

"Then when he ask'd us, knight by knight, if any
 Had seen it, all their answers were as one: 10
 'Nay, lord, and therefore have we sworn our vows.'

"'Lo now,' said Arthur, 'have ye seen a cloud?
 What go ye into the wilderness to see?'

"Then Galahad on the sudden, and in a voice
 Shrilling along the hall to Arthur, call'd
 'But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail,
 I saw the Holy Grail and heard a cry—
 "O Galahad, and O Galahad, follow me."'

"'Ah, Galahad, Galahad,' said the King, 'for such
 As thou art is the vision, not for these. 20
 Thy holy nun and thou have seen a sign—
 Holier is none, my Percivale, than she—
 A sign to maim this Order which I made.
 But ye, that follow but the leader's bell'
 (Brother, the King was hard upon his knights)
 'Taliessin is our fullest throat of song,
 And one hath sung and all the dumb will sing.
 Lancelot is Lancelot, and hath overborne
 Five knights at once, and every younger knight,
 Unproven, holds himself as Lancelot, 30
 Till overborne by one, he learns—and ye,
 What are you? Galahads?—no, nor Percivales'
 (For thus it pleased the King to range me close
 After Sir Galahad); 'nay,' said he, 'but men
 With strength and will to right the wrong'd, of
 power

To lay the sudden heads of violence flat,
Knights that in twelve great battles splash'd and
dyed

The strong White Horse in his own heathen blood—
But one hath seen, and all the blind will see.
Go since your vows are sacred, being made:
Yet—for ye know the cries of all my realm
Pass thro' this hall—how often, O my knights,
Your places being vacant at my side,
This chance of noble deeds will come and go
Unchallenged, while ye follow wandering fires 10
Lost in the quagmire! Many of you, yea most,
Return no more: ye think I show myself
Too dark a prophet: come now, let us meet
The morrow morn once more in one full field
Of gracious pastime, that once more the King,
Before ye leave him for this Quest, may count
The yet-unbroken strength of all his knights,
Rejoicing in that Order which he made."

"So when the sun broke next from underground,
All the great table of our Arthur closed 20
And clash'd in such a tourney and so full,
So many lances broken—never yet
Had Camelot seen the like, since Arthur came;
And I myself and Galahad, for a strength
Was in us from the vision, overthrew
So many knights that all the people cried,
And almost burst the barriers in their heat,
Shouting, 'Sir Galahad and Sir Percivale!'

"But when the next day brake from under-
ground—
O brother, had you known our Camelot, 30
Built by old kings, age after age, so old
The King himself had fears that it would fall,
So strange, and rich, and dim; for where the roofs
Totter'd toward each other in the sky,
Met foreheads all along the street of those
Who watch'd us pass; and lower, and where the long
Rich galleries, lady-laden, weigh'd the necks
Of dragons clinging to the crazy walls,

Thicker than drops from thunder, showers of flowers
Fell as we past ; and men and boys astride
On wyvern, lion, dragon, griffin, swan,
At all the corners, named us each by name,
Calling 'God speed !' but in the ways below
The knights and ladies wept, and rich and poor
Wept, and the King himself could hardly speak
For grief, and all in middle street the Queen,
Who rode by Lancelot, wail'd and shriek'd aloud,
'This madness has come on us for our sins.' 10
So to the Gate of the three Queens we came,
Where Arthur's wars are render'd mystically,
And thence departed every one his way.

"And I was lifted up in heart, and thought
Of all my late-shown prowess in the lists,
How my strong lance had beaten down the knights,
So many and famous names ; and never yet
Had heaven appear'd so blue, nor earth so green,
For all my blood danced in me, and I knew
That I should light upon the Holy Grail. 20

"Thereafter, the dark warning of our King,
That most of us would follow wandering fires,
Came like a driving gloom across my mind.
Then every evil word I had spoken once,
And every evil thought I had thought of old,
And every evil deed I ever did,
Awoke and cried, 'This Quest is not for thee.'
And lifting up mine eyes, I found myself
Alone, and in a land of sand and thorns,
And I was thirsty even unto death ; 30
And I, too, cried, 'This Quest is not for thee.'

"And on I rode, and when I thought my thirst
Would slay me, saw deep lawns, and then a brook,
With one sharp rapid, where the crisping white
Play'd ever back upon the sloping wave,
And took both ear and eye ; and o'er the brook
Were apple-trees, and apples by the brook
Fallen, and on the lawns. 'I will rest here,'
I said, 'I am not worthy of the Quest ;'

But even while I drank the brook, and ate
The goodly apples, all these things at once
Fell into dust, and I was left alone,
And thirsting, in a land of sand and thorns.

“And then behold a woman at a door
Spinning; and fair the house whereby she sat,
And kind the woman’s eyes and innocent,
And all her bearing gracious; and she rose
Opening her arms to meet me, as who should say,
‘Rest here;’ but when I touch’d her, lo! she, too, 10
Fell into dust and nothing, and the house
Became no better than a broken shed,
And in it a dead babe; and also this
Fell into dust, and I was left alone.

“And on I rode, and greater was my thirst.
Then flash’d a yellow gleam across the world,
And where it smote the plowshare in the field,
The plowman left his plowing, and fell down
Before it; where it glitter’d on her pail,
The milkmaid left her milking, and fell down 20
Before it, and I knew not why, but thought
‘The sun is rising,’ tho’ the sun had risen.
Then was I ware of one that on me moved
In golden armour with a crown of gold
About a casque all jewels; and his horse
In golden armour jewell’d everywhere:
And on the splendour came, flashing me blind;
And seem’d to me the Lord of all the world,
Being so huge. But when I thought he meant
To crush me, moving on me, lo! he, too, 30
Open’d his arms to embrace me as he came,
And up I went and touch’d him, and he, too,
Fell into dust, and I was left alone
And wearying in a land of sand and thorns.

“And I rode on and found a mighty hill,
And on the top, a city wall’d: the spires
Prick’d with incredible pinnacles into heaven.
And by the gateway stirr’d a crowd; and these
Cried to me climbing, ‘Welcome, Percivale!’

Thou mightiest and thou purest among men!
And glad was I and clomb, but found at top
No man, nor any voice. And thence I past
Far thro' a ruinous city, and I saw
That man had once dwelt there; but there I found
Only one man of an exceeding age.
'Where is that goodly company,' said I,
'That so cried out upon me?' and he had
Scarce any voice to answer, and yet gasp'd,
'Whence and what art thou?' and even as he spoke 10
Fell into dust, and disappear'd, and I
Was left alone once more, and cried in grief,
'Lo, if I find the Holy Grail itself
And touch it, it will crumble into dust.'

"And thence I dropt into a lowly vale,
Low as the hill was high, and where the vale
Was lowest, found a chapel, and thereby
A holy hermit in a hermitage,
To whom I told my phantoms, and he said
" 'O son, thou hast not true humility, 20
The highest virtue, mother of them all;
For when the Lord of all things made Himself
Naked of glory for His mortal change,
"Take thou my robe," she said, "for all is thine,"
And all her form shone forth with sudden light
So that the angels were amazed, and she
Follow'd Him down, and like a flying star
Led on the gray-hair'd wisdom of the east;
But her thou hast not known: for what is this
Thou thoughtest of thy prowess and thy sins? 30
Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself
As Galahad.' When the hermit made an end,
In silver armour suddenly Galahad shone
Before us, and against the chapel door
Laid lance, and enter'd, and we knelt in prayer.
And there the hermit slaked my burning thirst,
And at the sacring of the mass I saw
The holy elements alone; but he,
'Saw ye no more? I, Galahad, saw the Grail,
The Holy Grail, descend upon the shrine:
I saw the fiery face as of a child

That smote itself into the bread, and went;
And hither am I come; and never yet
Hath what thy sister taught me first to see,
This Holy Thing, fail'd from my side, nor come
Cover'd, but moving with me night and day,
Fainter by day, but always in the night
Blood-red, and sliding down the blacken'd marsh
Blood-red, and on the naked mountain top
Blood-red, and in the sleeping mere below
Blood-red. And in the strength of this I rode, 10
Shattering all evil customs everywhere,
And past thro' Pagan realms, and made them mine,
And clash'd with Pagan hordes, and bore them down,
And broke thro' all, and in the strength of this
Come victor. But my time is hard at hand,
And hence I go; and one will crown me king
Far in the spiritual city; and come thou, too,
For thou shalt see the vision when I go.'

"While thus he spake, his eye, dwelling on mine,
Drew me, with power upon me, till I grew 20
One with him, to believe as he believed.
Then, when the day began to wane, we went.

"There rose a hill that none but man could climb,
Scarr'd with a hundred wintry watercourses—
Storm at the top, and when we gain'd it, storm
Round us and death; for every moment glanced
His silver arms and gloom'd: so quick and thick
The lightnings here and there to left and right
Struck, till the dry old trunks about us, dead,
Yea, rotten with a hundred years of death, 30
Sprang into fire: and at the base we found
On either hand, as far as eye could see,
A great black swamp and of an evil smell,
Part black, part whiten'd with the bones of men,
Not to be crost, save that some ancient king
Had built a way, where, link'd with many a bridge,
A thousand piers ran into the great Sea.
And Galahad fled along them bridge by bridge,
And every bridge as quickly as he crost
Sprang into fire and vanish'd, tho' I yearn'd 40

To follow; and thrice above him all the heavens
 Open'd and blazed with thunder such as seem'd
 Shoutings of all the sons of God: and first
 At once I saw him far on the great Sea,
 In silver-shining armour starry-clear;
 And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
 Clothed in white samite or a luminous cloud.
 And with exceeding swiftness ran the boat,
 If boat it were—I saw not whence it came.
 And when the heavens open'd and blazed again 10
 Roaring, I saw him like a silver star—
 And had he set the sail, or had the boat
 Become a living creature clad with wings?
 And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
 Redder than any rose, a joy to me,
 For now I knew the veil had been withdrawn.
 Then in a moment when they blazed again
 Opening, I saw the least of little stars
 Down on the waste, and straight beyond the star
 I saw the spiritual city and all her spires 20
 And gateways in a glory like one pearl—
 No larger, tho' the goal of all the saints—
 Strike from the sea; and from the star there shot
 A rose-red sparkle to the city, and there
 Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail,
 Which never eyes on earth again shall see.
 Then fell the floods of heaven drowning the deep.
 And how my feet recrost the deathful ridge
 No memory in me lives; but that I touch'd
 The chapel-doors at dawn I know; and thence 30
 Taking my war-horse from the holy man,
 Glad that no phantom vex't me more, return'd
 To whence I came, the gate of Arthur's wars."

"O brother," ask'd Ambrosius, "for in sooth
 These ancient books—and they would win thee—
 teem,
 Only I find not there this Holy Grail,
 With miracles and marvels like to these,
 Not all unlike; which oftentime I read,
 Who read but on my breviary with ease,
 Till my head swims; and then go forth and pass 40

Down to the little thorpe that lies so close,
And almost plaster'd like a martin's nest
To these old walls—and mingle with our folk;
And knowing every honest face of theirs
As well as ever shepherd knew his sheep,
And every homely secret in their hearts,
Delight myself with gossip and old wives,
And ills and aches, and teething, lyings-in,
And mirthful sayings, children of the place,
That have no meaning half a league away:
Or lulling random squabbles when they rise,
Chafferings and chatterings at the market-cross,
Rejoice, small man, in this small world of mine,
Yea, even in their hens and in their eggs—
O brother, saving this Sir Galahad,
Came ye on none but phantoms in your quest,
No man, no woman?"

10

Then Sir Percivale:

"All men, to one so bound by such a vow,
And women were as phantoms. O, my brother,
Why wilt thou shame me to confess to thee
How far I falter'd from my quest and vow?
For after I had lain so many nights,
A bedmate of the snail and eft and snake,
In grass and burdock, I was changed to wan
And meagre, and the vision had not come;
And then I chanced upon a goodly town
With one dwelling great in the middle of it;
Thither I made, and there was I disarm'd
By maidens each as fair as any flower:
But when they led me into hall, behold,
The Princess of that castle was the one,
Brother, and that one only, who had ever
Made my heart leap; for when I moved of old
A slender page about her father's hall,
And she a slender maiden, all my heart
Went after her with longing: yet we twain
Had never kiss'd a kiss, or vow'd a vow.
And now I came upon her once again,
And one had wedded her, and he was dead,
And all his land and wealth and state were hers.

20

30

40

And while I tarried, every day she set
 A banquet richer than the day before
 By me; for all her longing and her will
 Was toward me as of old; till one fair morn,
 I walking to and fro beside a stream
 That flash'd across her orchard underneath
 Her castle-walls, she stole upon my walk,
 And calling me the greatest of all knights,
 Embraced me, and so kiss'd me the first time,
 And gave herself and all her wealth to me. 10
 Then I remember'd Arthur's warning word,
 That most of us would follow wandering fires,
 And the Quest faded in my heart. Anon,
 The heads of all her people drew to me,
 With supplication both of knees and tongue:
 'We have heard of thee: thou art our greatest
 knight,

Our Lady says it, and we well believe:
 Wed thou our Lady, and rule over us,
 And thou shalt be as Arthur in our land.'
 O me, my brother! but one night my vow 20
 Burnt me within, so that I rose and fled,
 But wail'd and wept, and hated mine own self,
 And ev'n the Holy Quest, and all but her;
 Then after I was join'd with Galahad
 Cared not for her, nor anything upon earth."
 Then said the monk, "Poor men, when yule is cold,
 Must be content to sit by little fires."
 And this am I, so that ye care for me
 Ever so little; yea, and blest be Heaven
 That brought thee here to this poor house of ours 30
 Where all the brethren are so hard, to warm
 My cold heart with a friend: but O the pity
 To find thine own first love once more—to hold,
 Hold her a wealthy bride within thine arms,
 Or all but hold, and then—cast her aside,
 Foregoing all her sweetness, like a weed.
 For we that want the warmth of double life,
 We that are plagued with dreams of something
 sweet

Beyond all sweetness in a life so rich,—
 Ah, blessed Lord, I speak too earthlywise, 40

Seeing I never stray'd beyond the cell,
 But live like an old badger in his earth,
 With earth about him everywhere, despite
 All fast and penance. Saw ye none beside,
 None of your knights?"

"Yea, so," said Percivale:

"One night my pathway swerving east, I saw
 The pelican on the casque of our Sir Bors
 All in the middle of the rising moon:
 And toward him spurr'd, and hail'd him, and he me,
 And each made joy of either; then he ask'd,
 'Where is he? hast thou seen him—Lancelot?—
 Once,'

Said good Sir Bors, 'he dash'd across me—mad,
 And maddening what he rode: and when I cried,
 "Ridest thou then so hotly on a quest
 So holy," Lancelot shouted, "Stay me not!
 I have been the sluggard, and I ride apace,
 For now there is a lion in the way."
 So vanish'd.'

"Then Sir Bors had ridden on
 Softly, and sorrowing for our Lancelot,
 Because his former madness, once the talk
 And scandal of our table, had return'd;
 For Lancelot's kith and kin so worship him
 That ill to him is ill to them; to Bors
 Beyond the rest: he well had been content
 Not to have seen, so Lancelot might have seen,
 The Holy Cup of healing; and, indeed,
 Being so clouded with his grief and love,
 Small heart was his after the Holy Quest:
 If God would send the vision, well: if not,
 The Quest and he were in the hands of Heaven.

"And then, with small adventure met, Sir Bors
 Rode to the lonest tract of all the realm,
 And found a people there among their crags,
 Our race and blood, a remnant that were left
 Paynim amid their circles, and the stones
 They pitch up straight to heaven: and their wise men

Were strong in that old magic which can trace
The wandering of the stars, and scoff'd at him
And this high Quest as at a simple thing:
Told him he follow'd—almost Arthur's words—
A mocking fire: 'what other fire than he,
Whereby the blood beats, and the blossom blows,
And the sea rolls, and all the world is warm'd?'
And when his answer chafed them, the rough crowd,
Hearing he had a difference with their priests,
Seized him, and bound and plunged him into a cell 10
Of great piled stones; and lying bounden there
In darkness thro' innumerable hours
He heard the hollow-ringing heavens sweep
Over him till by miracle—what else?—
Heavy as it was, a great stone slipt and fell,
Such as no wind could move: and thro' the gap
Glimmer'd the streaming scud: then came a night
Still as the day was loud; and thro' the gap
The seven clear stars of Arthur's Table Round—
For, brother, so one night, because they roll 20
Thro' such a round in heaven, we named the stars,
Rejoicing in ourselves and in our King—
And these, like bright eyes of familiar friends,
In on him shone: 'And then to me, to me,'
Said good Sir Bors, 'beyond all hopes of mine,
Who scarce had pray'd or ask'd it for myself—
Across the seven clear stars—O grace to me—
In colour like the fingers of a hand
Before a burning taper, the sweet Grail
Glided and past, and close upon it peal'd 30
A sharp quick thunder.' Afterwards, a maid,
Who kept our holy faith among her kin
In secret, entering, loosed and let him go."

To whom the monk: "And I remember now
That pelican on the casque: Sir Bors it was
Who spake so low and sadly at our board;
And mighty reverent at our grace was he:
A square-set man and honest; and his eyes,
An out-door sign of all the warmth within,
Smiled with his lips—a smile beneath a cloud,
But heaven had meant it for a sunny one:

Ay, ay, Sir Bors, who else? But when ye reach'd
 The city, found ye all your knights return'd,
 Or was there sooth in Arthur's prophecy,
 Tell me, and what said each, and what the King?"

Then answer'd Percivale: "And that can I,
 Brother, and truly; since the living words
 Of so great men as Lancelot and our King
 Pass not from door to door and out again,
 But sit within the house. O, when we reach'd
 The city, our horses stumbling as they trode
 On heaps of ruin, hornless unicorns,
 Crack'd basilisks, and splinter'd cockatrices,
 And shatter'd talbots, which had left the stones
 Raw, that they fell from, brought to us the hall.

10

"And there sat Arthur on the daïs-throne.
 And those that had gone out upon the Quest,
 Wasted and worn, and but a tithe of them,
 And those that had not, stood before the King,
 Who, when he saw me, rose, and bade me hail,
 Saying, 'A welfare in thine eye reproves
 Our fear of some disastrous chance for thee
 On hill, or plain, at sea, or flooding ford.
 So fierce a gale made havoc here of late
 Among the strange devices of our kings;
 Yea, shook this newer, stronger hall of ours,
 And from the statue Merlin moulded for us
 Half-wrench'd a golden wing; but now—the Quest,
 This vision—hast thou seen the Holy Cup,
 That Joseph brought of old to Glastonbury?"

20

"So when I told him all thyself hast heard,
 Ambrosius, and my fresh but fixt resolve
 To pass away into the quiet life,
 He answer'd not, but, sharply turning, ask'd
 Of Gawain, 'Gawain, was this Quest for thee?"

30

"'Nay, lord,' said Gawain, 'not for such as I.
 Therefore I communed with a saintly man,
 Who made me sure that Quest was not for me;
 For I was much awearied of the Quest:

But found a silk pavilion in a field,
And merry maidens in it; and then this gale
Tore my pavilion from the tenting-pin,
And blew my merry maidens all about
With all discomfort; yea, and but for this,
My twelvemonth and a day were pleasant to me.'

"He ceased; and Arthur turn'd to whom at first
He saw not, for Sir Bors, on entering, push'd
Athwart the throng to Lancelot, caught his hand,
Held it, and there, half-ridden by him, stood, 10
Until the King espied him, saying to him,
'Hail, Bors! if ever loyal man and true
Could see it, thou hast seen the Grail;' and Bors,
'Ask me not, for I may not speak of it:
I saw it;' and the tears were in his eyes.

"Then there remain'd but Lancelot, for the rest
Spake but of sundry perils in the storm;
Perhaps, like him of Cana in Holy Writ,
Our Arthur kept his best until the last;
'Thou, too, my Lancelot,' ask'd the King, 'my friend, 20
Our mightiest, hath this Quest avail'd for thee?'

"'Our mightiest!' answer'd Lancelot, with a
groan;
'O King!'—and when he paused, methought I spied
A dying fire of madness in his eyes—
'O King, my friend, if friend of thine I be,
Happier are those that welter in their sin,
Swine in the mud, that cannot see for slime,
Slime of the ditch: but in me lived a sin
So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure,
Noble, and knightly in me twined and clung 30
Round that one sin, until the wholesome flower
And poisonous grew together, each as each,
Not to be pluck'd asunder; and when thy knights
Sware, I swear with them only in the hope
That could I touch or see the Holy Grail
They might be pluck'd asunder. Then I spake
To one most holy saint, who wept and said,
That save they could be pluck'd asunder, all

My quest were but in vain ; to whom I vow'd
That I would work according as he will'd.
And forth I went, and while I yearn'd and strove
To tear the twain asunder in my heart,
My madness came upon me as of old,
And whipt me into waste fields far away ;
There was I beaten down by little men,
Mean knights, to whom the moving of my sword
And shadow of my spear had been enow
To scare them from me once ; and then I came 10
All in my folly to the naked shore,
Wide flats, where nothing but coarse grasses grew ;
But such a blast, my King, began to blow,
So loud a blast along the shore and sea,
Ye could not hear the waters for the blast,
Tho' heapt in mounds and ridges all the sea
Drove like a cataract, and all the sand
Swept like a river, and the clouded heavens
Were shaken with the motion and the sound.
And blackening in the sea-foam sway'd a boat, 20
Half-swallow'd in it, anchor'd with a chain ;
And in my madness to myself I said,
"I will embark and I will lose myself.
And in the great sea wash away my sin."
I burst the chain, I sprang into the boat.
Seven days I drove along the dreary deep,
And with me drove the moon and all the stars ;
And the wind fell, and on the seventh night
I heard the shingle grinding in the surge,
And felt the boat shock earth, and looking up, 30
Behold, the enchanted towers of Carbonek,
A castle like a rock upon a rock,
With chasm-like portals open to the sea,
And steps that met the breaker ! there was none
Stood near it but a lion on each side
That kept the entry, and the moon was full.
Then from the boat I leapt, and up the stairs.
There drew my sword. With sudden-flaring manes
Those two great beasts rose upright like a man,
Each gript a shoulder, and I stood between ; 40
And, when I would have smitten them, heard a voice,
"Doubt not, go forward ; if thou doubt, the beasts

Will tear thee piecemeal." Then with violence
The sword was dash'd from out my hand, and fell.
And up into the sounding hall I past;
But nothing in the sounding hall I saw,
No bench nor table, painting on the wall
Or shield of knight; only the rounded moon
Thro' the tall oriel on the rolling sea.
But always in the quiet house I heard,
Clear as a lark, high o'er me as a lark,
A sweet voice singing in the topmost tower 10
To the eastward: up I climb'd a thousand steps
With pain: as in a dream I seem'd to climb
For ever: at the last I reach'd a door,
A light was in the crannies, and I heard,
"Glory and joy and honour to our Lord
And to the Holy Vessel of the Grail."
Then in my madness I essay'd the door;
It gave; and thro' a stormy glare, a heat
As from a seventimes-heated furnace, I,
Blasted and burnt, and blinded as I was, 20
With such a fierceness that I swoon'd away—
O, yet methought I saw the Holy Grail,
All pall'd in crimson samite, and around
Great angels, awful shapes, and wings and eyes
And but for all my madness and my sin,
And then my swooning, I had sworn I saw
That which I saw; but what I saw was veil'd
And cover'd; and this Quest was not for me.'

"So speaking, and here ceasing, Lancelot left
The hall long silent, till Sir Gawain—nay, 30
Brother, I need not tell thee foolish words,—
A reckless and irreverent knight was he,
Now bolden'd by the silence of his King,—
Well, I will tell thee: 'O King, my liege,' he said,
'Hath Gawain fail'd in any quest of thine?
When have I stinted stroke in foughten field?
But as for thine, my good friend Percivale,
Thy holy nun and thou have driven men mad,
Yea, made our mightiest madder than our least.
But by mine eyes and by mine ears I swear, 40

I will be deafer than the blue-eyed cat,
And thrice as blind as any noonday owl,
To holy virgins in their ecstasies,
Henceforward.'

"'Deafer,' said the blameless King,
'Gawain, and blinder unto holy things
Hope not to make thyself by idle vows,
Being too blind to have desire to see.
But if indeed there came a sign from heaven,
Blessed are Bors, Lancelot and Percivale,
For these have seen according to their sight.
For every fiery prophet in old times,
And all the sacred madness of the bard,
When God made music thro' them, could but speak
His music by the framework and the chord;
And as ye saw it ye have spoken truth.

10

"'Nay—but thou errest, Lancelot: never yet
Could all of true and noble in knight and man
Twine round one sin, whatever it might be,
With such a closeness, but apart there grew,
Save that he were the swine thou spakest of,
Some root of knighthood and pure nobleness;
Whereto see thou, that it may bear its flower.

20

"'And spake I not too truly, O my knights?
Was I too dark a prophet when I said
To those who went upon the Holy Quest,
That most of them would follow wandering fires,
Lost in the quagmire?—lost to me and gone,
And left me gazing at a barren board,
And a lean Order—scarce return'd a tithe—
And out of those to whom the vision came
My greatest hardly will believe he saw;
Another hath beheld it afar off,
And leaving human wrongs to right themselves,
Cares but to pass into the silent life.
And one hath had the vision face to face,
And now his chair desires him here in vain,
However they may crown him elsewhere.

30

“‘And some among you held, that if the King
Had seen the sight he would have sworn the vow :
Not easily, seeing that the King must guard
That which he rules, and is but as the hind
To whom a space of land is given to plow.
Who may not wander from the allotted field
Before his work be done ; but, being one,
Let visions of the night or of the day
Come, as they will ; and many a time they come,
Until this earth he walks on seems not earth,
This light that strikes his eyeball is not light,
This air that smites his forehead is not air
But vision—yea, in his very hand and foot—
In moments when he feels he cannot die,
And knows himself no vision to himself,
Nor the high God a vision, nor that One
Who rose again : ye have seen what ye have seen.’

10

“So spake the King : I knew not all he meant.”

PELLEAS AND ETTARRE

King Arthur made new knights to fill the gap
Left by the Holy Quest ; and as he sat
In hall at old Caerleon, the high doors
Were softly sunder'd, and thro' these a youth,
Pelleas, and the sweet smell of the fields
Past, and the sunshine came along with him.

20

“Make me thy knight because I know, Sir King,
All that belongs to knighthood, and I love.”
Such was his cry : for having heard the King
Had let proclaim a tournament—the prize
A golden circlet and a knightly sword,
Full fain had Pelleas for his lady won
The golden circlet, for himself the sword :
And there were those who knew him near the King,
And promised for him : and Arthur made him knight.

30

And this new knight, Sir Pelleas of the isles—
But lately come to his inheritance,

And lord of many a barren isle was he—
Riding at noon, a day or twain before,
Across the forest call'd of Dean, to find
Caerleon and the King, had felt the sun
Beat like a strong knight on his helm, and reel'd
Almost to falling from his horse; but saw
Near him a mound of even-sloping side,
Whereon a hundred stately beeches grew.
And here and there great hollies under them;
But for a mile all around was open space,
And fern and heath: and slowly Pelleas drew
To that dim day, then binding his good horse
To a tree, cast himself down; and as he lay
At random looking over the brown earth
Thro' that green-glooming twilight of the grove,
It seem'd to Pelleas that the fern without
Burnt as a living fire of emeralds,
So that his eyes were dazzled looking at it.
Then o'er it crost the dimness of a cloud
Floating, and once the shadow of a bird
Flying, and then a fawn; and his eyes closed.
And since he loved all maidens, but no maid
In special, half-awake he whisper'd, "Where?
O where? I love thee, tho' I know thee not.
For fair thou art and pure as Guinevere,
And I will make thee with my spear and sword
As famous—O my Queen, my Guinevere,
For I will be thine Arthur when we meet."

10

20

Suddenly waken'd with a sound of talk
And laughter at the limit of the wood,
And glancing thro' the hoary boles, he saw,
Strange as to some old prophet might have seem'd
A vision hovering on a sea of fire,
Damsels in divers colours like the cloud
Of sunset and sunrise, and all of them
On horses, and the horses richly trapt
Breast-high in that bright line of bracken stood:
And all the damsels talk'd confusedly,
And one was pointing this way, and one that,
Because the way was lost.

30

40

And Pelleas rose,
 And loosed his horse, and led him to the light.
 There she that seem'd the chief among them said,
 "In happy time behold our pilot-star!
 Youth, we are damsels-errant, and we ride,
 Arm'd as ye see, to tilt against the knights
 There at Caerleon, but have lost our way:
 To right? to left? straight forward? back again?
 Which? tell us quickly."

Pelleas gazing thought,

"Is Guinevere herself so beautiful?" 16

For large her violet eyes look'd, and her bloom
 A rosy dawn kindled in stainless heavens,
 And round her limbs, mature in womanhood;
 And slender was her hand and small her shape;
 And but for those large eyes, the haunts of scorn,
 She might have seem'd a toy to trifle with,
 And pass and care no more. But while he gazed
 The beauty of her flesh abash'd the boy,
 As tho' it were the beauty of her soul:
 For as the base man, judging of the good, 20
 Puts his own baseness in him by default
 Of will and nature, so did Pelleas lend
 All the young beauty of his own soul to hers,
 Believing her; and when she spake to him,
 Stammer'd, and could not make her a reply.
 For out of the waste islands had he come,
 Where saving his own sisters he had known
 Scarce any but the women of his isles,
 Rough wives, that laugh'd and scream'd against the
 gulls,
 Makers of nets, and living from the sea. 30

Then with a slow smile turn'd the lady round
 And look'd upon her people; and as when
 A stone is flung into some sleeping tarn,
 The circle widens till it lip the marge,
 Spread the slow smile thro' all her company.
 Three knights were there among; and they too
 smiled,

Scorning him; for the lady was Ettarre,
And she was a great lady in her land.

Again she said, "O wild and of the woods,
Knowest thou not the fashion of our speech?
Or have the Heavens but given thee a fair face,
Lacking a tongue?"

"O damsel," answer'd he,
"I woke from dreams; and coming out of gloom
Was dazzled by the sudden light, and crave
Pardon: but will ye to Caerleon? I
Go likewise: shall I lead you to the King?"

10

"Lead then," she said; and thro' the woods they
went.
And while they rode, the meaning in his eyes,
His tenderness of manner, and chaste awe,
His broken utterances and bashfulness,
Were all a burthen to her, and in her heart
She mutter'd, "I have lighted on a fool,
Raw, yet so stale!" But since her mind was bent
On hearing, after trumpet blown, her name
And title, "Queen of Beauty," in the lists
Cried—and beholding him so strong, she thought
That peradventure he will fight for me,
And win the circlet: therefore flatter'd him,
Being so gracious, that he wellnigh deem'd
His wish by hers was echo'd; and her knights
And all her damsels too were gracious to him,
For she was a great lady.

20

Then his helpless heart
Caerleon, ere they past to lodging, she,
Taking his hand, "O the strong hand," she said,
"See! look at mine! but wilt thou fight for me,
And win me this fine circlet, Pelleas,
That I may love thee?"

30

And when they reach'd
Leapt, and he cried, "Ay! wilt thou if I win?"
"Ay, that will I," she answer'd, and she laugh'd,

And straitly nipt the hand, and flung it from her;
Then glanced askew at those three knights of hers,
Till all her ladies laugh'd along with her.

“O happy world,” thought Pelleas, “all, meseems,
Are happy; I the happiest of them all.”
Nor slept that night for pleasure in his blood,
And green wood-ways, and eyes among the leaves;
Then being on the morrow knighted, sware
To love one only. And as he came away,
The men who met him rounded on their heels 10
And wonder'd after him, because his face
Shone like the countenance of a priest of old
Against the flame about a sacrifice
Kindled by fire from heaven: so glad was he.

Then Arthur made vast banquets, and strange
knights
From the four winds came in: and each one sat,
Tho' served with choice from air, land, stream, and
sea,
Oft in mid-banquet measuring with his eyes
His neighbour's make and might: and Pelleas look'd 20
Noble among the noble, for he dream'd
His lady loved him, and he knew himself
Loved of the King: and him his new-made knight
Worshipt, whose lightest whisper moved him more
Than all the ranged reasons of the world.

Then blush'd and brake the morning of the jousts,
And this was call'd “The Tournament of Youth:”
For Arthur, loving his young knight, withheld
His older and his mightier from the lists,
That Pelleas might obtain his lady's love,
According to her promise, and remain 30
Lord of the tourney. And Arthur had the jousts
Down in that flat by the shore of Usk
Holden: the gilded parapets were crown'd
With faces, and the great tower fill'd with eyes
Up to the summit, and the trumpets blew.
There all day long Sir Pelleas kept the field

With honour: so by that strong hand of his
The sword and golden circlet were achieved.

Then rang the shout his lady loved: the heat
Of pride and glory fired her face; her eye
Sparkled; she caught the circlet from his lance,
And there before the people crown'd herself:
So for the last time she was gracious to him.

Then at Caerleon for a space—her look
Bright for all others, cloudier on her knight—
Linger'd Ettarre: and seeing Pelleas droop, 10
Said Guinevere, "We marvel at thee much,
O damsel, wearing this unsunny face
To him who won thee glory!" And she said,
"Had ye not held your Lancelot in your bower,
My Queen, he had not won." Whereat the Queen,
As one whose foot is bitten by an ant,
Glanced down upon her, turn'd and went her way.

But after, when her damsels, and herself,
And those three knights all set their faces home,
Sir Pelleas follow'd. She that saw him cried, 20
"Damsels—and yet I should be shamed to say it—
I cannot bide Sir Baby. Keep him back
Among yourselves. Would rather that we had
Some rough old knight who knew the worldly way,
Albeit grizzlier than a bear, to ride
And jest with: take him to you, keep him off,
And pamper him with papmeat, if ye will,
Old milky fables of the wolf and sheep,
Such as the wholesome mothers tell their boys.
Nay, should ye try him with a merry one 30
To find his mettle, good: and if he fly us,
Small matter! let him." This her damsels heard,
And mindful of her small and cruel hand,
They, closing round him thro' the journey home,
Acted her best, and always from her side
Restrain'd him with all manner of device,
So that he could not come to speech with her.
And when she gain'd her castle, upsprang the bridge,

Down rang the grate of iron thro' the groove,
And he was left alone in open field.

"These be the ways of ladies," Pelleas thought,
"To those who love them, trials of our faith.
Yea, let her prove me to the uttermost,
For loyal to the uttermost am I."
So made his moan; and, darkness falling, sought
A priory not far off, there lodged, but rose
With morning every day, and, moist or dry,
Full-arm'd upon his charger all day long
Sat by the walls, and no one open'd to him.

10

And this persistence turn'd her scorn to wrath.
Then calling her three knights, she charged them,
"Out!
And drive him from the walls." And out they came,
But Pelleas overthrew them as they dash'd
Against him one by one; and these return'd,
But still he kept his watch beneath the wall.

Thereon her wrath became a hate; and once,
A week beyond, while walking on the walls
With her three knights, she pointed downward, 20

"Look,
He haunts me—I cannot breathe—besieges me;
Down! strike him! put my hate into your strokes,
And drive him from my walls." And down they
went,

And Pelleas overthrew them one by one;
And from the tower above him cried Ettarre,

"Bind him, and bring him in."

He heard her voice;

Then let the strong hand, which had overthrown
Her minion-knights, by those he overthrew
Be bounden straight, and so they brought him in.

Then when he came before Ettarre, the sight 30
Of her rich beauty made him at one glance
More bondsman in his heart than in his bonds.
Yet with good cheer he spake, "Behold me, Lady,

A prisoner, and the vassal of thy will;
And if thou keep me in thy donjon here,
Content am I so that I see thy face
But once a day: for I have sworn my vows,
And thou hast given thy promise, and I know
That all these pains are trials of my faith,
And that thyself, when thou hast seen me strain'd
And sifted to the utmost, wilt at length
Yield me thy love and know me for thy knight."

Then she began to rail so bitterly,
With all her damsels, he was stricken mute;
But when she mock'd his vows and the great King,
Lighted on words: "For pity of thine own self,
Peace, Lady, peace: is he not thine and mine?"
"Thou fool," she said, "I never heard his voice
But long'd to break away. Unbind him now,
And thrust him out of doors; for save he be
Fool to the midmost marrow of his bones,
He will return no more." And those, her three,
Laugh'd, and unbound, and thrust him from the gate. 20

And after this, a week beyond, again
She call'd them, saying, "There he watches yet,
There like a dog before his master's door!
Kick'd, he returns: do ye not hate him, ye?
Ye know yourselves: how can ye bide at peace,
Affronted with his fulsome innocence?
Are ye but creatures of the board and bed,
Not men to strike? Fall on him all at once,
And if ye slay him I reckon not: if ye fail,
Give ye the slave mine order to be bound,
Bind him as heretofore, and bring him in:
It may be ye shall slay him in his bonds."

She spake; and at her will they couch'd their spears,
Three against one: and Gawain passing by,
Bound upon solitary adventure, saw
Low down beneath the shadow of those towers
A villainy, three to one. and thro' his heart
The fire of honour and all noble deeds
Flash'd, and he call'd, "I strike upon thy side—

The caitiffs!" "Nay," said Pelleas, "but forbear;
He needs no aid who doth his lady's will."

So Gawain, looking at the villainy done,
Forebore, but in his heat and eagerness
Trembled and quiver'd, as the dog, withheld
A moment from the vermin that he sees
Before him, shivers, ere he springs and kills.

And Pelleas overthrew them, one to three;
And they rose up, and bound, and brought him in.
Then first her anger, leaving Pelleas, burn'd 10
Full on her knights in many an evil name
Of craven, weakling, and thrice-beaten hound:
"Yet, take him, ye that scarce are fit to touch,
Far less to bind, your victor, and thrust him out,
And let who will release him from his bonds.
And if he comes again"—there she brake short;
And Pelleas answer'd, "Lady, for indeed
I loved you and I deem'd you beautiful,
I cannot brook to see your beauty marr'd
Thro' evil spite: and if ye love me not, 20
I cannot bear to dream you so forsworn:
I had liefer ye were worthy of my love,
Than to be loved again of you—farewell;
And tho' ye kill my hope, not yet my love,
Vex not yourself: ye will not see me more."

While thus he spake, she gazed upon the man
Of princely bearing, tho' in bonds, and thought,
"Why have I push'd him from me? this man loves,
If love there be: yet him I loved not. Why?
I deem'd him fool? yea, so? or that in him 30
A something—was it nobler than myself?—
Seem'd my reproach? He is not of my kind.
He could not love me, did he know me well.
Nay, let him go—and quickly." And her knights
Laugh'd not, but thrust him bounden out of door.

Forth sprang Gawain, and loosed him from his
bonds,
And flung them o'er the walls; and afterward,

Shaking his hands, as from a lazar's rag,
"Faith of my body," he said, "and art thou not—
Yea thou art he, whom late our Arthur made
Knight of his table; yea and he that won
The circlet? wherefore hast thou so defamed
Thy brotherhood in me and all the rest,
As let these caitiffs on thee work their will?"

And Pelleas answer'd, "O, their wills are hers
For whom I won the circlet; and mine, hers,
Thus to be bounden, so to see her face,
Marr'd tho' it be with spite and mockery now,
Other than when I found her in the woods;
And tho' she hath me bounden but in spite,
And all to flout me, when they bring me in,
Let me be bounden, I shall see her face;
Else must I die thro' mine unhappiness."

10

And Gawain answer'd kindly tho' in scorn,
"Why, let my lady bind me if she will,
And let my lady beat me if she will:
But an she send her delegate to thrall
These fighting hands of mine—Christ kill me then
But I will slice him handless by the wrist,
And let my lady sear the stump for him,
Howl as he may. But hold me for your friend;
Come, ye know nothing: here I pledge my troth,
Yea, by the honour of the Table Round,
I will be leal to thee and work thy work,
And tame thy jailing princess to thine hand.
Lend me thine horse and arms, and I will say
That I have slain thee. She will let me in
To hear the manner of thy fight and fall;
Then, when I come within her counsels, then
From prime to vespers will I chant thy praise
As prowtest knight and truest lover, more
Than any have sung thee living, till she long
To have thee back in lusty life again,
Not to be bound, save by white bonds and warm,
Dearer than freedom. Wherefore now thy horse
And armour: let me go: be comforted:

20

30

Give me three days to melt her fancy, and hope
The third night hence will bring thee news of gold."

Then Pelleas lent his horse and all his arms,
Saving the goodly sword, his prize, and took
Gawain's, and said, "Betray me not, but help—
Art thou not he whom men call light-of-love?"

"Ay," said Gawain, "for women be so light."
Then bounded forward to the castle walls,
And raised a bugle hanging from his neck,
And winded it, and that so musically
That all the old echoes hidden in the wall
Rang out like hollow woods at huntingtide.

10

Up ran a score of damsels to the tower ;
"Avaunt," they cried, "our lady loves thee not."
But Gawain lifting up his vizor said,
"Gawain am I, Gawain of Arthur's court,
And I have slain this Pelleas whom ye hate :
Behold his horse and armour. Open gates,
And I will make you merry."

And down they ran,
Her damsels, crying to their lady, "Lo !
Pelleas is dead—he told us—he that hath
His horse and armour ; will ye let him in ?
He slew him ! Gawain, Gawain of the court,
Sir Gawain—there he waits below the wall,
Blowing his bugle as who should say him nay."

20

And so, leave given, straight on thro' open door
Rode Gawain, whom she greeted courteously.
"Dead, is it so?" she ask'd. "Ay, ay," said he,
"And oft in dying cried upon your name,"
"Pity on him," she answer'd, "a good knight,
But never let me hide one hour at peace."
"Ay," thought Gawain, "and you be fair enow :
But I to your dead man have given my troth,
That whom ye loathe, him will I make you love."

30

So those three days, aimless about the land,
Lost in a doubt, Pelleas wandering
Waited, until the third night brought a moon
With promise of large light on woods and ways.

Hot was the night and silent ; but a sound
Of Gawain ever coming, and this lay—
Which Pelleas had heard sung before the Queen,
And seen her sadden listening—vext his heart,
And marr'd his rest—"A worm within the rose."

"A rose, but one, none other rose had I,
A rose, one rose, and this was wondrous fair,
One rose, a rose that gladden'd earth and sky,
One rose, my rose, that sweeten'd all mine air—
I cared not for the thorns ; the thorns were there.

10

"One rose, a rose to gather by and by,
One rose, a rose to gather and to wear,
No rose but one—what other rose had I?
One rose, my rose ; a rose that will not die,—
He dies who loves it,—if the worm be there."

This tender rhyme, and evermore the doubt,
"Why lingers Gawain with his golden news?"
So shook him that he could not rest, but rode
Ere midnight to her walls, and bound his horse
Hard by the gates. Wide open were the gates,
And no watch kept ; and in thro' these he past,
And heard but his own steps, and his own heart
Beating, for nothing moved but his own self,
And his own shadow. Then he crost the court,
And spied not any light in hall or bower,
But saw the postern portal also wide
Yawning ; and up a slope of garden, all
Of roses white and red, and brambles mixt
And overgrowing them, went on, and found,
Here too, all hush'd below the mellow moon,
Save that one rivulet from a tiny cave
Came lightening downward, and so spilt itself
Among the roses, and was lost again.

20

30

Then was he ware of three pavilions rear'd
Above the bushes, gilden-peakt: in one,
Red after revel, droned her lurdane knights
Slumbering, and their three squires across their feet:
In one, their malice on the placid lip
Froz'n by sweet sleep, four of her damsels lay:
And in the third, the circlet of the jousts
Bound on her brow, were Gawain and Ettarre.

Back, as a hand that pushes thro' the leaf
To find a nest and feels a snake, he drew: 10
Back, as a coward slinks from what he fears
To cope with, or a traitor proven, or bound
Beaten, did Pelleas in an utter shame
Creep with his shadow thro' the court again,
Fingering at his sword-handle until he stood
There on the castle-bridge once more, and thought,
"I will go back, and slay them where they lie."

And so went back, and seeing them yet in sleep
Said, "Ye, that so dishallow the holy sleep,
Your sleep is death," and drew the sword, and 20
thought,
"What! slay a sleeping knight? the King hath bound
And sworn me to this brotherhood;" again,
"Alas that ever a knight should be so false."
Then turn'd, and so return'd, and groaning laid
The naked sword athwart their naked throats,
There left it, and them sleeping; and she lay,
The circlet of the tourney round her brows,
And the sword of the tourney across her throat.

And forth he past, and mounting on his horse
Stared at her towers that, larger than themselves 30
In their own darkness, throng'd into the moon.
Then crush'd the saddle with his thighs, and clench'd
His hands, and madden'd with himself and moan'd:

"Would they have risen against me in their blood
At the last day? I might have answer'd them
Even before high God. O towers so strong,
Huge, solid, would that even while I gaze

The crack of earthquake shivering to your base
 Split you, and Hell burst up your harlot roofs
 Bellowing, and charr'd you thro' and thro' within,
 Black as the harlot's heart—hollow as a skull!
 Let the fierce east scream thro' your eyelet-holes,
 And whirl the dust of harlots round and round
 In dung and nettles! hiss, snake—I saw him there—
 Let the fox bark, let the wolf yell. Who yells
 Here in the still sweet summer night, but I—
 I, the poor Pelleas whom she call'd her fool? 10
 Fool, beast—he, she, or I? myself most fool;
 Beast too, as lacking human wit—disgraced,
 Dishonour'd all for trial of true love—
 Love?—we be all alike: only the King
 Hath made us fools and liars. O noble vows!
 O great and sane and simple race of brutes
 That own no lust because they have no law!
 For why should I have loved her to my shame?
 I loathe her, as I loved her to my shame.
 I never loved her, I but lusted for her— 20
 Away—”

He dash'd the rowel into his horse,
 And bounded forth and vanish'd thro the night.

Then she, that felt the cold touch on her throat,
 Awaking knew the sword, and turn'd herself
 To Gawain: “Liar, for thou hast not slain
 This Pelleas! here he stood, and might have slain
 Me and thyself.” And he that tells the tale
 Says that her ever-veering fancy turn'd
 To Pelleas, as the one true knight on earth,
 And only lover; and thro' her love her life 30
 Wasted and pined, desiring him in vain.

But he by wild and way for half the night,
 And over hard and soft, striking the sod
 From out the soft, the spark from off the hard,
 Rode till the star above the wakening sun,
 Beside that tower where Percivale was cowl'd,
 Glanced from the rosy forehead of the dawn.
 For so the words were flash'd into his heart
 He knew not whence or wherefore: “O sweet star,

Pure on the virgin forehead of the dawn!"
And there he would have wept, but felt his eyes
Harder and drier than a fountain bed
In summer: thither came the village girls
And linger'd talking, and they come no more
Till the sweet heavens have fill'd it from the heights
Again with living waters in the change
Of seasons: hard his eyes: harder his heart
Seem'd; but so weary were his limbs, that he,
Gasping, "Of Arthur's hall am I, but here, 10
Here let me rest and die," cast himself down,
And gulf'd his griefs in inmost sleep; so lay,
Till shaken by a dream, that Gawain fired
The hall of Merlin, and the morning star
Reel'd in the smoke, brake into flame, and fell.

He woke, and being ware of some one nigh,
Sent hands upon him, as to tear him, crying,
"False! and I held thee pure as Guinevere."

But Percivale stood near him and replied,
"Am I but false as Guinevere is pure? 20
Or art thou mazed with dreams? or being one
Of our free-spoken Table has not heard
That Lancelot"—there he check'd himself and
paused.

Then fared it with Sir Pelleas as with one
Who gets a wound in battle, and the sword
That made it plunges thro' the wound again,
And pricks it deeper; and he shrank and wail'd,
"Is the Queen false?" and Percivale was mute.
"Have any of our Round Table held their vows?"
And Percivale made answer not a word. 30
"Is the King true?" "The King!" said Percivale.
"Why then let men couple at once with wolves.
What! art thou mad?"

But Pelleas, leaping up,
Ran thro' the doors and vaulted on his horse
And fled: small pity upon his horse had he,
Or on himself, or any, and when he met

A cripple, one that held a hand for alms—
 Hunch'd as he was, and like an old dwarf-elm
 That turns its back on the salt blast, the boy
 Paused not, but overrode him, shouting, "False,
 And false with Gawain!" and so left him bruised
 And batter'd, and fled on, and hill and wood
 Went ever streaming by him till the gloom,
 That follows on the turning of the world,
 Darken'd the common path: he twitch'd the reins,
 And made his beast that better knew it, swerve 10
 Now off it and now on; but when he saw
 High up in heaven the hall that Merlin built,
 Blackening against the dead-green stripes of even,
 "Black nest of rats," he groan'd, "ye build too high."

Not long thereafter from the city gates
 Issued Sir Lancelot riding airily,
 Warm with a gracious parting from the Queen,
 Peace at his heart, and gazing at a star
 And marvelling what it was: on whom the boy,
 Across the silent seeded meadow-grass 20
 Borne, clash'd: and Lancelot, saying, "What name
 hast thou
 That ridest here so blindly and so hard?"
 "No name, no name," he shouted, "a scourge am I
 To lash the treasons of the Table Round."
 "Yea, but thy name?" "I have many names," he
 cried:
 "I am wrath and shame and hate and evil fame,
 And like a poisonous wind I pass to blast
 And blaze the crime of Lancelot and the Queen."
 "First over me," said Lancelot, "shalt thou pass."
 "Fight therefore," yell'd the youth, and either knight 30
 Drew back a space, and when they closed, at once
 The weary steed of Pelleas floundering flung
 His rider, who call'd out from the dark field,
 "Thou art false as Hell: slay me: I have no sword."
 Then Lancelot, "Yea, between thy lips—and sharp;
 But here will I disedge it by thy death."
 "Slay then," he shriek'd, "my will is to be slain,"
 And Lancelot, with his heel upon the fall'n,

Rolling his eyes, a moment stood, then spake:
"Rise, weakling; I am Lancelot; say thy say."

And Lancelot slowly rode his warhorse back
To Camelot, and Sir Pelleas in brief while
Caught his unbroken limbs from the dark field,
And follow'd to the city. It chanced that both
Brake into hall together, worn and pale.
There with her knights and dames was Guinevere.
Full wonderingly she gazed on Lancelot
So soon return'd, and then on Pelleas, him 10
Who had not greeted her, but cast himself
Down on a bench, hard-breathing. "Have ye
fought?"

She ask'd of Lancelot. "Ay, my Queen," he said.
"And thou hast overthrown him?" "Ay, my
Queen."

Then she, turning to Pelleas, "O young knight,
Hath the great heart of knighthood in thee fail'd
So far thou canst not bide, unfrowardly,
A fall from *him*?" Then, for he answer'd not,
"Or hast thou other griefs? If I, the Queen,
May help them, loose thy tongue, and let me know." 20
But Pelleas lifted up an eye so fierce
She quail'd; and he, hissing "I have no sword,"
Sprang from the door into the dark. The Queen
Look'd hard upon her lover, he on her;
And each foresaw the dolorous day to be:
And all talk died, as in a grove all song
Beneath the shadow of some bird of prey;
Then a long silence came upon the hall,
And Modred thought, "The time is hard at hand."

THE LAST TOURNAMENT

Dagonet, the fool, whom Gawain in his mood 20
Had made mock-knight of Arthur's Table Round,
At Camelot, high above the yellowing woods,
Danced like a wither'd leaf before the hall.
And toward him from the hall, with harp in hand,
And from the crown thereof a carcanet
Of ruby swaying to and fro, the prize

Of Tristram in the jousts of yesterday,
Came Tristram, saying, "Why skip ye so, Sir Fool?"

For Arthur and Sir Lancelot riding once
Far down beneath a winding wall of rock
Heard a child wail. A stump of oak half-dead,
From roots like some black coil of carven snakes,
Clutch'd at the crag, and started thro' mid air
Bearing an eagle's nest: and thro' the tree
Rush'd ever a rainy wind, and thro' the wind
Pierced ever a child's cry: and crag and tree 10
Scaling, Sir Lancelot from the perilous nest,
This ruby necklace thrice around her neck,
And all unscarr'd from beak or talon, brought
A maiden babe; which Arthur pitying took,
Then gave it to his Queen to rear: the Queen
But coldly acquiescing, in her white arms
Received, and after loved it tenderly,
And named it Nestling; so forgot herself
A moment, and her cares; till that young life
Being smitten in mid heaven with mortal cold 20
Past from her; and in time the carcanet
Vext her with plaintive memories of the child:
So she, delivering it to Arthur, said,
"Take thou the jewels of this dead innocence,
And make them, an thou wilt, a tourney-prize."

To whom the King, "Peace to thine eagle-borne
Dead nestling, and this honour after death,
Following thy will! but, O my Queen, I muse
Why ye not wear on arm, or neck, or zone
Those diamonds that I rescued from the tarn, 30
And Lancelot won, methought, for thee to wear."

"Would rather you had let them fall," she cried,
"Plunge and be lost—ill-fated as they were,
A bitterness to me!—ye look amazed,
Not knowing they were lost as soon as given—
Slid from my hands, when I was leaning out
Above the river—that unhappy child
Past in her barge: but rosier luck will go
With these rich jewels, seeing that they came

Not from the skeleton of a brother-slayer,
But the sweet body of a maiden babe.
Perchance—who knows?—the purest of thy knights
May win them for the purest of my maids.”

She ended, and the cry of a great joust
With trumpet-blowing ran on all the ways
From Camelot in among the faded fields
To furthest towers; and everywhere the knights
Arm'd for a day of glory before the King.

But on the hither side of that loud morn 10
Into the hall stagger'd, his visage ribb'd
From ear to ear with dogwhip-weals, his nose
Bridge-broken, one eye out, and one hand off,
And one with shatter'd fingers dangling lame,
A churl, to whom indignantly the King,

“My churl, for whom Christ died, what evil beast
Hath drawn his claws athwart thy face? or fiend?
Man was it who marr'd heaven's image in thee
thus?”

Then, sputtering thro' the hedge of splinter'd teeth,
Yet strangers to the tongue, and with blunt stump 20
Pitch-blacken'd sawing the air, said the maim'd churl,

“He took them and he drave them to his tower—
Some hold he was a table-knight of thine—
A hundred goodly ones—the Red Knight, he—
Lord, I was tending swine, and the Red Knight
Brake in upon me and drave them to his tower;
And when I call'd upon thy name as one
That doest right by gentle and by churl,
Maim'd me and maul'd, and would outright have
slain,

Save that he sware me to a message, saying, 30
‘Tell thou the King and all his liars, that I
Have founded my Round Table in the North,
And whatsoever his own knights have sworn
My knights have sworn the counter to it—and say
My tower is full of harlots, like his court,

But mine are worthier, seeing they profess
 To be none other than themselves—and say
 My knights are all adulterers like his own,
 But mine are truer, seeing they profess
 To be none other; and say his hour is come,
 The heathen are upon him, his long lance
 Broken, and his Excalibur a straw.’ ”

Then Arthur turn'd to Kay the seneschal,
 “Take thou my churl, and tend him curiously
 Like a king's heir, till all his hurts be whole. 10
 The heathen—but that ever-climbing wave,
 Hurl'd back again so often in empty foam,
 Hath lain for years at rest—and renegades,
 Thieves, bandits, leavings of confusion, whom
 The wholesome realm is purged of otherwhere,
 Friends, thro' your manhood and your fealty,—now
 Make their last head like Satan in the North.
 My younger knights, new-made, in whom your
 flower

Waits to be solid fruit of golden deeds,
 Move with me toward their quelling, which achieved, 20
 The loneliest ways are safe from shore to shore.
 But thou, Sir Lancelot, sitting in my place
 Enchair'd to-morrow, arbitrate the field;
 For wherefore shouldst thou care to mingle with it,
 Only to yield my Queen her own again?
 Speak, Lancelot, thou art silent: is it well?”

Thereto Sir Lancelot answer'd, “It is well:
 Yet better if the King abide, and leave
 The leading of his younger knights to me.
 Else, for the King has will'd it, it is well.” 30

Then Arthur rose and Lancelot follow'd him,
 And while they stood without the doors, the King
 Turn'd to him saying, “Is it then so well?
 Or mine the blame that oft I seem as he
 Of whom was written, ‘A sound is in his ears’?
 The foot that loiters, bidden go,—the glance
 That only seems half-loyal to command,—
 A manner somewhat fall'n from reverence—

Or have I dream'd the bearing of our knights
Tells of a manhood ever less and lower?
Or whence the fear lest this my realm, uprear'd,
By noble deeds at one with noble vows,
From flat confusion and brute violences,
Reel back into the beast, and be no more?"

He spoke, and taking all his younger knights,
Down the slope city rode, and sharply turn'd
North by the gate. In her high bower the Queen,
Working a tapestry, lifted up her head, 10
Watch'd her lord pass, and knew not that she sigh'd.
Then ran across her memory the strange rhyme
Of bygone Merlin, "Where is he who knows?
From the great deep to the great deep he goes."

But when the morning of a tournament,
By these in earnest those in mockery call'd
The Tournament of the Dead Innocence,
Brake with a wet wind blowing, Lancelot,
Round whose sick head all night, like birds of prey,
The words of Arthur flying shriek'd, arose, 20
And down a streetway hung with folds of pure
White samite, and by fountains running wine,
Where children sat in white with cups of gold,
Moved to the lists, and there, with slow sad steps
Ascending, fill'd his double-dragon'd chair.

He glanced and saw the stately galleries,
Dame, damsel, each thro' worship of their Queen
White-robed in honour of the stainless child,
And some with scatter'd jewels, like a bank
Of maiden snow mingled with sparks of fire, 30
He look'd but once, and vail'd his eyes again.

The sudden trumpet sounded as in a dream
To ears but half-awaked, then one low roll
Of Autumn thunder, and the jousts began:
And ever the wind blew, and yellowing leaf
And gloom and gleam, and shower and shorn plume
Went down it. Sighing weariedly, as one
Who sits and gazes on a faded fire,

When all the goodlier guests are past away,
 Sat their great umpire, looking o'er the lists.
 He saw the laws that ruled the tournament
 Broken, but spake not; once, a knight cast down
 Before his throne of arbitration cursed
 The dead babe and the follies of the King;
 And once the laces of a helmet crack'd,
 And show'd him, like a vermin in its hole,
 Modred, a narrow face: anon he heard
 The voice that billow'd round the barriers roar 10
 An ocean-sounding welcome to one knight,
 But newly-enter'd, taller than the rest,
 And armour'd all in forest green, whereon
 There tript a hundred tiny silver deer,
 And wearing but a holly-spray for crest,
 With ever-scattering berries, and on shield
 A spear, a harp, a bugle—Tristram—late
 From overseas in Brittany return'd,
 And marriage with a princess of that realm,
 Isolt the White—Sir Tristram of the Woods— 20
 Whom Lancelot knew, had held sometime with pain
 His own against him, and now yearn'd to shake
 The burthen off his heart in one full shock
 With Tristram ev'n to death: his strong hands gript
 And dinted the gilt dragons right and left,
 Until he groan'd for wrath—so many of those,
 That ware their ladies' colours on the casque,
 Drew from before Sir Tristram to the bounds,
 And there with gibes and flickering mockeries
 Stood, while he mutter'd, "Craven crests! O shame! 30
 What faith have these in whom they swear to love?
 The glory of our Round Table is no more."

So Tristram won, and Lancelot gave, the gems,
 Not speaking other word than "Hast thou won?
 Art thou the purest, brother? See, the hand
 Wherewith thou takest this, is red!" to whom
 Tristram, half plagued by Lancelot's languorous
 mood,
 Made answer, "Ay, but wherefore toss me this
 Like a dry bone cast to some hungry hound?
 Let be thy fair Queen's fantasy. Strength of heart 40

And might of limb, but mainly use and skill,
Are winners in this pastime of our King.
My hand—belike the lance hath dript upon it—
No blood of mine, I trow; but O chief knight,
Right arm of Arthur in the battlefield,
Great brother, thou nor I have made the world;
Be happy in thy fair Queen as I in mine.”

And Tristram round the gallery made his horse
Caracole; then bow'd his homage, bluntly saying,
“Fair damsels, each to him who worships each 10
Sole Queen of Beauty and of love, behold
This day my Queen of Beauty is not here.”
And most of these were mute, some anger'd, one
Murmuring, “All courtesy is dead,” and one,
“The glory of our Round Table is no more.”

Then fell thick rain, plume droopt and mantle
clung,
And pettish cries awoke, and the wan day
Went glooming down in wet and weariness:
But under her black brows a swarthy one
Laugh'd shrilly, crying, “Praise the patient saint, 20
Our one white day of Innocence hath past,
Tho' somewhat draggled at the skirt. So be it.
The snowdrop only, flowering thro' the year,
Would make the world as blank as Winter-tide.
Come—let us gladden their sad eyes, our Queen's
And Lancelot's, at this night's solemnity
With all the kindlier colours of the field.”

So dame and damsel glitter'd at the feast
Variously gay: for he that tells the tale
Liken'd them, saying, as when an hour of cold 30
Falls on the mountain in midsummer snows,
And all the purple slopes of mountain flowers
Pass under white, till the warm hour returns
With veer of wind, and all are flowers again;
So dame and damsel cast the simple white,
And glowing in all colours, the live grass,
Rose-campion, bluebell, kingcup, poppy, glanced
About the revels, and with mirth so loud

Beyond all use, that, half-amazed, the Queen,
And wroth at Tristram and the lawless jousts,
Brake up their sports, then slowly to her bower
Parted, and in her bosom pain was lord.

And little Dagonet on the morrow morn,
High over all the yellowing Autumn-tide,
Danced like a wither'd leaf before the hall.
Then Tristram saying, "Why skip ye so, Sir Fool?"
Wheel'd round on either heel, Dagonet replied,
"Belike for lack of wiser company; 10
Or being fool, and seeing too much wit
Makes the world rotten, why, belike I skip
To know myself the wisest knight of all."
"Ay, fool," said Tristram, "but 'tis eating dry
To dance without a catch, a roundelay
To dance to." Then he twangled on his harp,
And while he twangled little Dagonet stood
Quiet as any water-sodden log
Stay'd in the wandering warble of a brook;
But when the twangling ended, skipt again; 20
And being ask'd, "Why skipt ye not, Sir Fool?"
Made answer, "I had liefer twenty years
Skip to the broken music of my brains
Than any broken music thou canst make."

Then Tristram, waiting for the quip to come,
"Good now, what music have I broken, fool?"
And little Dagonet, skipping, "Arthur, the King's;
For when thou playest that air with Queen Isolt,
Thou makest broken music with thy bride,
Her daintier namesake down in Brittany— 30
And so thou breakest Arthur's music too."
"Save for that broken music in thy brains,
Sir Fool," said Tristram, "I would break thy head,
Fool, I came late, the heathen wars were o'er,
The life had flown, we sware but by the shell—
I am but a fool to reason with a fool—
Come, thou art crabb'd and sour; but lean me down,
Sir Dagonet, one of thy long ass's ears,
And harken if my music be not true.

“Free love—free field—we love but while we may:

The woods are hush'd, their music is no more:
The leaf is dead, the yearning past away:
New leaf, new life—the days of frost are o'er:
New life, new love, to suit the newer day:
New loves are sweet as those that went before:
Free love—free field—we love but while we may.’

“Ye might have moved slow-measure to my tune,
Not stood stockstill. I made it in the woods,
And heard it ring as true as tested gold.”

10

But Dagonet with one foot poised in his hand,
“Friend, did ye mark that fountain yesterday
Made to run wine?—but this had run itself
All out like a long life to a sour end—
And them that round it sat with golden cups
To hand the wine to whomsoever came—
The twelve small damosels white as Innocence,
In honour of poor Innocence the babe,
Who left the gems which Innocence the Queen
Lent to the King, and Innocence the King
Gave for a prize—and one of those white slips
Handed her cup and piped, the pretty one,
‘Drink, drink, Sir Fool,’ and thereupon I drank,
Spat—pish—the cup was gold, the draught was
mud.”

20

And Tristram, “Was it muddier than thy gibes?
Is all the laughter gone dead out of thee?—
Not marking how the knighthood mock thee, fool—
‘Fear God: honour the King—his one true knight—
Sole follower of the vows’—for here be they
Who knew thee swine enow before I came,
Smuttier than blasted grain: but when the King
Had made thee fool, thy vanity so shot up
It frightened all free fool from out thy heart;
Which left thee less than fool, and less than swine,
A naked aught—yet swine I hold thee still,
For I have flung thee pearls and find thee swine.”

30

And little Dagonet mincing with his feet,
 "Knight, an ye fling those rubies round my neck
 In lieu of hers, I'll hold thou hast some touch
 Of music, since I care not for thy pearls.
 Swine? I have wallow'd, I have wash'd—the world
 Is flesh and shadow—I have had my day.
 The dirty nurse, Experience, in her kind
 Hath foul'd me—an I wallow'd, then I wash'd—
 I have had my day and my philosophies—
 And thank the Lord I am King Arthur's fool. 10
 Swine, say ye? swine, goats, asses, rams and geese
 Troop'd round a Paynim harper once, who thumm'd
 On such a wire as musically as thou
 Some such fine song—but never a king's fool."

And Tristram, "Then were swine, goats, asses,
 geese
 The wiser fools, seeing thy Paynim bard
 Had such a mastery of his mystery
 That he could harp his wife up out of hell."

Then Dagonet, turning on the ball of his foot,
 "And whither harp'st thou thine? down! and thyself 20
 Down! and two more: a helpful harper thou,
 That harpest downward! Dost thou know the star
 We call the harp of Arthur up in heaven?"

And Tristram, "Ay, Sir Fool, for when our King
 Was victor wellnigh day by day, the knights,
 Glorying in each new glory, set his name
 High on all hills, and in the signs of heaven."

And Dagonet answer'd, "Ay, and when the land
 Was freed, and the Queen false, ye set yourself
 To babble about him, all to show your wit—
 And whether he were King by courtesy,
 Or King by right—and so went harping down
 The black king's highway, got so far, and grew
 So witty that ye play'd at ducks and drakes
 With Arthur's vows on the great lake of fire.
 Tuwhoo! do ye see it? do ye see the star?" 30

“Nay, fool,” said Tristram, “not in open day.”
And Dagonet, “Nay, nor will: I see it and hear.
It makes a silent music up in heaven,
And I, and Arthur and the angels hear,
And then we skip.” “Lo, fool,” he said, “ye talk
Fool’s treason: is the King thy brother fool?”
Then little Dagonet clapt his hands and shrill’d,
“Ay, ay, my brother fool, the king of fools!
Conceits himself as God that he can make
Figs out of thistles, silk from bristles, milk 10
From burning spurge, honey from hornet-combs,
And men from beasts—Long live the king of fools!”

And down the city Dagonet danced away;
But thro’ the slowly-mellowing avenues
And solitary passes of the wood
Rode Tristram toward Lyonesse and the west.
Before him fled the face of Queen Isolt
With ruby-circled neck, but evermore
Past, as a rustle or twitter in the wood
Made dull his inner, keen his outer eye 20
For all that walk’d, or crept, or perch’d, or flew.
Anon the face, as, when a gust hath blown,
Unruffling waters re-collect the shape
Of one that in them sees himself, return’d;
But at the slot or fewmets of a deer,
Or ev’n a fall’n feather, vanish’d again.

So on for all that day from lawn to lawn
Thro’ many a league-long bower he rode. At length
A lodge of intertwined beechen-boughs
Furze-cramm’d, and bracken-rooft, the which him- 30
self

Built for a summer day with Queen Isolt
Against a shower, dark in the golden grove
Appearing, sent his fancy back to where
She lived a moon in that low lodge with him:
Till Mark her lord had past, the Cornish King,
With six or seven, when Tristram was away,
And snatch’d her thence; yet dreading worse than
shame

Her warrior Tristram, spake not any word,
But bode his hour, devising wretchedness.

And now that desert lodge to Tristram lookt
So sweet, that halting, in he past, and sank
Down on a drift of foliage random-blown;
But could not rest for musing how to smoothe
And sleek his marriage over to the Queen.
Perchance in lone Tintagil far from all
The fonguesters of the court she had not heard.
But then what folly had sent him overseas 10
After she left him lonely here? a name?
Was it the name of one in Brittany,
Isolt, the daughter of the King? "Isolt
Of the white hands" they call'd her: the sweet name
Allured him first, and then the maid herself,
Who served him well with those white hands of hers,
And loved him well, until himself had thought
He loved her also, wedded easily,
But left her all as easily, and return'd.
The black-blue Irish hair and Irish eyes 20
Had drawn him home—what marvel? then he laid
His brows upon the drifted leaf and dream'd.

He seem'd to pace the strand of Brittany
Between Isolt of Britain and his bride,
And show'd them both the ruby-chain, and both
Began to struggle for it, till his Queen
Graspt it so hard, that all her hand was red.
Then cried the Breton, "Look, her hand is red!
These be no rubies, this is frozen blood,
And melts within her hand—her hand is hot 30
With ill desires, but this I gave thee, look,
Is all as cool and white as any flower."
Follow'd a rush of eagle's wings, and then
A whimpering of the spirit of the child,
Because the twain had spoil'd her carcanet.

He dream'd; but Arthur with a hundred spears
Rode far, till o'er the illimitable reed,
And many a glancing plash and sallowy isle,
The wide-wing'd sunset of the misty marsh

Glared on a huge machicolated tower
That stood with open doors, whereout was roll'd
A roar of riot, as from men secure
Amid their marshes, ruffians at their ease
Among their harlot-brides, an evil song.
"Lo, there," said one of Arthur's youth, for there
High on a grim dead tree before the tower,
A goodly brother of the Table Round
Swung by the neck: and on the boughs a shield
Showing a shower of blood in a field noir, 10
And there beside a horn, inflamed the knights,
At that dishonour done the gilded spur,
Till each would clash the shield, and blow the horn.
But Arthur waved them back. Alone he rode.
Then at the dry harsh roar of the great horn,
That sent the face of all the marsh aloft
An ever upward-rushing storm and cloud
Of shriek and plume, the Red Knight heard, and all,
Even to tipmost lance and topmost helm,
In blood-red armour sallying, howl'd to the King, 20

"The teeth of Hell flay bare and gnash thee flat!—
Lo! art thou not that eunuch-hearted King
Who fain had clipt free manhood from the world—
The woman-worshipper? Yea, God's curse, and I!
Slain was the brother of my paramour
By a knight of thine, and I that heard her whine
And snivel, being eunuch-hearted too,
Sware by the scorpion-worm that twists in hell,
And stings itself to everlasting death,
To hang whatever knight of thine I fought
And tumbled. Art thou King?—Look to thy life!" 30

He ended: Arthur knew the voice; the face
Wellnigh was helmet-hidden, and the name
Went wandering somewhere darkling in his mind.
And Arthur deign'd not use of word or sword,
But let the drunkard, as he stretch'd from horse
To strike him, overbalancing his bulk,
Down from the causeway heavily to the swamp
Fall, as the crest of some slow-arching wave,
Heard in dead night along that table-shore, 40

Drops flat, and after the great waters break
 Whitening for half a league, and thin themselves,
 Far over sands marbled with moon and cloud,
 From less and less to nothing; thus he fell
 Head-heavy; then the knights, who watch'd him,
 roar'd

And shouted and leapt down upon the fall'n;
 There trampled out his face from being known,
 And sank his head in mire, and slimed themselves:
 Nor heard the King for their own cries, but sprang
 Thro' open doors, and swording right and left 10
 Men, women, on their sodden faces, hurl'd
 The tables over and the wines, and slew
 Till all the rafters rang with woman-yells,
 And all the pavement stream'd with massacre:
 Then, echoing yell with yell, they fired the tower,
 Which half that autumn night, like the live North,
 Red-pulsing up thro' Alioth and Alcor,
 Made all above it, and a hundred meres
 About it, as the water Moab saw
 Come round by the East, and out beyond them 20
 flush'd
 The long low dune, and lazy-plunging sea.

So all the ways were safe from shore to shore,
 But in the heart of Arthur pain was lord.

Then, out of Tristram waking, the red dream
 Fled with a shout, and that low lodge return'd,
 Mid-forest, and the wind among the boughs.
 He whistled his good warhorse left to graze
 Among the forest greens, vaulted upon him,
 And rode beneath an ever-showering leaf,
 Till one lone woman, weeping near a cross, 30
 Stay'd him. "Why weep ye?" "Lord," she said,
 "my man

Hath left me or is dead;" whereon he thought—
 "What, if she hate me now? I would not this.
 What, if she love me still? I would not that.
 I know not what I would"—but said to her,
 "Yet weep not thou, lest, if thy mate return,
 He finds thy favour changed and love thee not"—

Then pressing day by day thro' Lyonesse
 Last in a roky hollow, belling, heard
 The hounds of Mark, and felt the goodly hounds
 Yelp at his heart, but turning, past and gain'd
 Tintagil, half in sea, and high on land,
 A crown of towers.

Down in a casement sat,
 A low sea-sunset glorying round her hair
 And glossy-throated grace, Isolt the Queen.
 And when she heard the feet of Tristram grind
 The spring stone that scaled about her tower, 10
 Flush'd, started, met him at the doors, and there
 Belted his body with her white embrace,
 Crying aloud, "Not Mark—not Mark, my soul!
 The footstep flutter'd me at first: not he:
 Catlike thro' his own castle steals my Mark,
 But warrior-wise thou stridest thro' his halls
 Who hates thee, as I him—ev'n to the death.
 My soul, I felt my hatred for my Mark
 Quicken within me, and knew that thou wert nigh."
 To whom Sir Tristram smiling, "I am here. 20
 Let be thy Mark, seeing he is not thine."

And drawing somewhat backward she replied,
 "Can he be wrong'd who is not ev'n his own,
 But save for dread of thee had beaten me,
 Scratch'd, bitten, blinded, marr'd me somehow—
 Mark?

What rights are his that dare not strike for them?
 Not lift a hand—not, tho' he found me thus!
 But harken! have ye met him? hence he went
 To-day for three days' hunting—as he said—
 And so returns belike within an hour. 30
 Mark's way, my soul!—but eat not thou with Mark,
 Because he hates thee even more than fears;
 Nor drink: and when thou passest any wood
 Close vizer, lest an arrow from the bush
 Should leave me all alone with Mark and hell.
 My God, the measure of my hate for Mark
 Is as the measure of my love for thee."

So, pluck'd one way by hate and one by love,
 Drain'd of her force, again she sat, and spake
 To Tristram, as he knelt before her, saying,
 "O hunter, and O blower of the horn,
 Harper, and thou hast been a rover too,
 For, ere I mated with my shambling king,
 Ye twain had fallen out about the bride
 Of one—his name is out of me—the prize,
 If prize she were—(what marvel—she could see)—
 Thine, friend; and ever since my craven seeks
 To wreck thee villainously: but, O Sir Knight,
 What dame or damsel have ye kneel'd to last?" 10

And Tristram, "Last to my Queen Paramount,
 Here now to my Queen Paramount of love
 And loveliness—ay, lovelier than when first
 Her light feet fell on our rough Lyonesse,
 Sailing from Ireland."

Softly laugh'd Isolt;
 "Flatter me not, for hath not our great Queen
 My dole of beauty trebled?" and he said,
 "Her beauty is her beauty, and thine thine,
 And thine is more to me—soft, gracious, kind—
 Save when thy Mark is kindled on thy lips
 Most gracious; but she, haughty, ev'n to him,
 Lancelot; for I have seen him wan enow
 To make one doubt if ever the great Queen
 Have yielded him her love." 20

To whom Isolt,
 "Ah then, false hunter and false harper, thou
 Who brakest thro' the scruple of my bond,
 Calling me thy white hind, and saying to me
 That Guinevere had sinn'd against the highest,
 And I—misynoked with such a want of man—
 That I could hardly sin against the lowest." 30

He answer'd, "O my soul, be comforted!
 If this be sweet, to sin in leading-strings,
 If here be comfort, and if ours be sin,
 Crown'd warrant had we for the crowning sin

That made us happy: but how ye greet me—fear
And fault and doubt—no word of that fond tale—
Thy deep heart-yearnings, thy sweet memories
Of Tristram in that year he was away.”

And, saddening on the sudden, spake Isolt,
“I had forgotten all in my strong joy
To see thee—yearnings?—ay! for, hour by hour,
Here in the never-ended afternoon,
O sweeter than all memories of thee,
Deeper than any yearnings after thee 10
Seem'd those far-rolling, westward-smiling seas,
Watch'd from this tower. Isolt of Britain dash'd
Before Isolt of Brittany on the strand,
Would that have chill'd her bride-kiss? Wedded
her?
Fought in her father's battles? wounded there?
The King was all fulfill'd with gratefulness,
And she, my namesake of the hands, that heal'd
Thy hurt and heart with unguent and caress—
Well—can I wish her any huger wrong
Than having known thee? her too hast thou left 20
To pine and waste in those sweet memories.
O were I not my Mark's, by whom all men
Are noble, I should hate thee more than love.”

And Tristram, fondling her light hands, replied,
“Grace, Queen, for being loved: she loved me well.
Did I love her? the name at least I loved.
Isolt?—I fought his battles, for Isolt!
The night was dark; the true star set. Isolt!
The name was ruler of the dark——Isolt?
Care not for her! patient, and prayerful, meek, 30
Pale-blooded, she will yield herself to God.”

And Isolt answer'd, “Yea, and why not I?
Mine is the larger need, who am not meek,
Pale-blooded, prayerful. Let me tell thee now.
Here one black, mute midsummer night I sat,
Lonely, but musing on thee, wondering where,
Murmuring a light song I had heard thee sing,
And once or twice I spake thy name aloud.

Then flash'd a levin-brand; and near me stood,
 In fuming sulphur blue and green, a fiend—
 Mark's way to steal behind one in the dark—
 For there was Mark: 'He has wedded her,' he said,
 Not said, but hiss'd it: then this crown of towers
 So shook to such a roar of all the sky,
 That here in utter dark I swoon'd away,
 And woke again in utter dark, and cried,
 'I will flee hence and give myself to God'—
 And thou were lying in thy new leman's arms." 10

Then Tristram, ever dallying with her hand,
 "May God be with thee, sweet, when old and gray,
 And past desire!" a saying that anger'd her.
 " 'May God be with thee, sweet, when thou art old,
 And sweet no more to me!' I need Him now.
 For when had Lancelot utter'd aught so gross
 Ev'n to the swineherd's malkin in the mast?
 The greater man, the greater courtesy,
 Far other was the Tristram, Arthur's knight!
 But thou, thro' ever harrying thy wild beasts— 20
 Save that to touch a harp, tilt with a lance
 Becomes thee well—art grown wild beast thyself.
 How darest thou, if lover, push me even
 In fancy from thy side, and set me far
 In the gray distance, half a life away,
 Her to be loved no more? Unsay it, unswear!
 Flatter me rather, seeing me so weak,
 Broken with Mark and hate and solitude,
 Thy marriage and mine own, that I should suck
 Lies like sweet wines: lie to me: I believe. 30
 Will ye not lie? not swear, as there ye kneel,
 And solemnly as when ye sware to him,
 The man of men, our King—My God, the power
 Was once in vows when men believed the King!
 They lied not then, who sware, and thro' their vows
 The King prevailing made his realm:—I say,
 Swear to me thou wilt love me ev'n when old,
 Gray-hair'd, and past desire, and in despair."

Then Tristram, pacing moodily up and down,
 "Vows! did you keep the vow you made to Mark 40

More than I mine? Lied, say ye? Nay, but learnt,
The vow that binds too strictly snaps itself—
My knighthood taught me this—ay, being snapt—
We run more counter to the soul thereof
Than had we never sworn. I swear no more.
I swore to the great King, and am forsworn.
For once—ev'n to the height—I honour'd him.
'Man, is he man at all?' methought, when first
I rode from our rough Lyonesse, and beheld
That victor of the Pagan throned in hall— 10
His hair, a sun that ray'd from off a brow
Like hillsnow high in heaven, the steel-blue eyes,
The golden beard that clothed his lips with light—
Moreover, that weird legend of his birth,
With Merlin's mystic babble about his end
Amazed me; then, his foot was on a stool
Shaped as a dragon; he seem'd to me no man,
But Michaël trampling Satan; so I sware,
Being amazed: but this went by—The vows! 20
O ay—the wholesome madness of an hour—
They served their use, their time; for every knight
Believed himself a greater than himself,
And every follower eyed him as a God;
Till he, being lifted up beyond himself,
Did mightier deeds than elsewhere he had done,
And so the realm was made; but then their vows—
First mainly thro' that sullying of our Queen—
Began to gall the knighthood, asking whence
Had Arthur right to bind them to himself?
Dropt down from heaven? wash'd up from out the 30
deep?
They fail'd to trace him thro' the flesh and blood
Of our old kings: whence then? a doubtful lord
To bind them by inviolable vows,
Which flesh and blood perforce would violate:
For feel this arm of mine—the tide within
Red with free chase and heather-scented air,
Pulsing full man; can Arthur make me pure
As any maiden child? lock up my tongue
From uttering freely what I freely hear?
Bind me to one? The wide world laughs at it. 40
And worldling of the world am I, and know

The ptarmigan that whitens ere his hour
 Woos his own end; we are not angels here
 Nor shall be: vows—I am woodman of the woods,
 And hear the garnet-headed yaffingale
 Mock them: my soul, we love but while we may;
 And therefore is my love so large for thee,
 Seeing it is not bounded save by love."

Here ending, he moved toward her, and she said,
 "Good: an I turn'd away my love for thee
 To some one thrice as courteous as thyself— 10
 For courtesy wins woman all as well
 As valour may, but he that closes both
 Is perfect, he is Lancelot—taller indeed,
 Rosier and comelier, thou—but say I loved
 This knightliest of all knights, and cast thee back
 Thine own small saw, 'We love but while we may.'
 Well then, what answer?"

He that while she spake,
 Mindful of what he brought to adorn her with,
 The jewels, had let one finger lightly touch
 The warm white apple of her throat, replied, 20
 "Press this a little closer, sweet, until—
 Come, I am hunger'd and half-anger'd—meat,
 Wine, wine—and I will love thee to the death,
 And out beyond into the dream to come."

So then, when both were brought to full accord,
 She rose, and set before him all he will'd;
 And after these had comforted the blood
 With meats and wines, and satiated their hearts—
 Now talking of their woodland paradise,
 The deer, the dews, the fern, the founts, the lawns; 30
 Now mocking at the much ungainliness,
 And craven shifts, and long crane legs of Mark—
 Then Tristram laughing caught the harp, and sang:

"Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that bend the brier!
 A star in heaven, a star within the mere!
 Ay, ay, O ay—a star was my desire,
 And one was far apart, and one was near:

Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that bow the grass!
And one was water and one star was fire,
And one will ever shine and one will pass.
Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that move the mere.”

Then in the light's last glimmer Tristram show'd
And swung the ruby carcanet. She cried,
“The collar of some Order, which our King
Hath newly founded, all for thee, my soul,
For thee, to yield thee grace beyond thy peers.”

“Not so, my Queen,” he said, “but the red fruit 10
Grown on a magic oak-tree in mid-heaven,
And won by Tristram as a tourney-prize,
And hither brought by Tristram for his last
Love-offering and peace-offering unto thee.”

He spoke, he turn'd, then, flinging round her neck,
Claspt it, and cried “Thine Order, O my Queen!”
But, while he bow'd to kiss the jewell'd throat,
Out of the dark, just as the lips had touch'd,
Behind him rose a shadow and a shriek—
“Mark's way,” said Mark, and clove him thro' the 20
brain.

That night came Arthur home, and while he
climb'd,
All in a death-dumb autumn-dripping gloom,
The stairway to the hall, and look'd and saw
The great Queen's bower was dark,—about his feet
A voice clung sobbing till he question'd it,
“What art thou?” and the voice about his feet
Sent up an answer, sobbing, “I am thy fool,
And I shall never make thee smile again.”

GUINEVERE

Queen Guinevere had fled the court, and sat
There in the holy house at Almesbury
Weeping, none with her save a little maid,
A novice: one low light betwixt them burn'd
Blurr'd by the creeping mist, for all aboard,

Beneath a moon unseen albeit at full,
The white mist, like a face-cloth to the face,
Clung to the dead earth, and the land was still.

For hither had she fled, her cause of flight
Sir Modred; he the nearest to the King,
His nephew, ever like a subtle beast,
Lay couchant with his eyes upon the throne,
Ready to spring, waiting a chance: for this
He chill'd the popular praises of the King
With silent smiles of slow disparagement; 10
And tamper'd with the Lords of the White Horse,
Heathen, the brood by Hengist left; and sought
To make disruption in the Table Round
Of Arthur, and to splinter it into feuds
Serving his traitorous end; and all his aims
Were sharpen'd by strong hate for Lancelot.

For thus it chanc'd one morn when all the court,
Green-suited, but with plumes that mock'd the may,
Had been, their wont, a-maying and return'd,
That Modred still in green, all ear and eye, 20
Climb'd to the high top of the garden-wall
To spy some secret scandal if he might,
And saw the Queen who sat betwixt her best
Enid, and lissome Vivien, of her court
The wiliest and the worst; and more than this
He saw not, for Sir Lancelot passing by
Spied where he couch'd, and as the gardener's hand
Picks from the colewort a green caterpillar,
So from the high wall and the flowering grove
Of grasses Lancelot pluck'd him by the heel, 30
And cast him as a worm upon the way;
But when he knew the Prince though marr'd with
dust,
He, reverencing king's blood in a bad man,
Made such excuses as he might, and these
Full knightly without scorn; for in those days
No knight of Arthur's noblest dealt in scorn;
But, if a man were halt or hunch'd, in him
By those whom God had made full-limb'd and tall,
Scorn was allow'd as part of his defect,

And he was answer'd softly by the King.
And all his Table. So Sir Lancelot help
To raise the Prince, who rising twice or thrice
Full sharply smote his knees, and smil'd, and went:
But, ever after, the small violence done
Rankl'd in him and ruffl'd all his heart,
As the sharp wind that ruffles all day long
A little bitter pool about a stone
On the bare coast.

But when Sir Lancelot told
This matter to the Queen, at first she laugh'd 10
Lightly, to think of Modred's dusty fall,
Then shudder'd, as the village wife who cries,
"I shudder, some one steps across my grave;"
Then laugh'd again, but faintlier, for indeed
She half foresaw that he, the subtle beast,
Would track her guilt until he found, and hers
Would be for evermore a name of scorn.
Henceforward rarely could she front in hall,
Or elsewhere, Modred's narrow foxy face,
Heart-hiding smile, and gray persistent eye; 20
Henceforward, too, the Powers that tend the soul,
To help it from the death that cannot die,
And save it even in extremes, began
To vex and plague her. Many a time for hours,
Beside the placid breathings of the King,
In the dead night, grim faces came and went
Before her, or a vague spiritual fear—
Like to some doubtful noise of creaking doors,
Heard by the watcher in a haunted house,
That keeps the rust of murder on the walls— 30
Held her awake: or if she slept, she dream'd
An awful dream; for then she seem'd to stand
On some vast plain before a setting sun,
And from the sun there swiftly made at her
A ghastly something, and its shadow flew
Before it, till it touch'd her, and she turn'd—
When lo! her own, that broadening from her feet,
And blackening, swallow'd all the land, and in it
Far cities burnt, and with a cry she woke.
And all this trouble did not pass but grew, 40

Till ev'n the clear face of the guileless King,
And trustful courtesies of household life,
Became her bane; and at the last she said,
"O Lancelot, get thee hence to thine own land,
For if thou tarry we shall meet again,
And if we meet again, some evil chance
Will make the smouldering scandal break and blaze
Before the people, and our lord the King."
And Lancelot ever promis'd, but remain'd,
And still they met and met. Again she said, 10
"O Lancelot, if thou love me get thee hence."
And then they were agreed upon a night
(When the good King should not be there) to meet
And part for ever. Passion-pale they met
And greeted. Hands in hands, and eye to eye,
Low on the border of her couch they sat
Stammering and staring. It was their last hour,
A madness of farewells. And Modred brought
His creatures to the basement of the tower
For testimony; and crying with full voice, 20
"Traitor, come out, ye are trapp'd at last," arous'd
Lancelot, who rushing outward lionlike
Leapt on him, and hurl'd him headlong, and he fell
Stunn'd, and his creatures took and bare him off,
And all was still: then she, "The end is come,
And I am sham'd for ever;" and he said,
"Mine be the shame; mine was the sin: but rise,
And fly to my strong castle overseas:
There will I hide thee, till my life shall end,
There hold thee with my life against the world." 30
She answer'd, "Lancelot, wilt thou hold me so?
Nay, friend, for we have taken our farewells.
Would God that thou couldst hide me from myself!
Mine is the shame, for I was wife, and thou
Unwedded: yet rise now, and let us fly,
For I will draw me into sanctuary,
And bide my doom." So Lancelot got her horse,
Set her thereon, and mounted on his own,
And then they rode to the divided way,
There kiss'd, and parted weeping: for he pass'd, 40
Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen,
Back to his land; but she to Almesbury

Fled all night long by glimmering waste and weald,
And heard the Spirits of the waste and weald
Moan as she fled, or thought she heard them moan:
And in herself she moan'd, "Too late, too late!"
Till in the cold wind that foreruns the morn,
A blot in heaven, the Raven, flying high,
Croak'd, and she thought, "He spies a field of death;
For now the Heathen of the Northern Sea,
Lur'd by the crimes and frailties of the court,
Begin to slay the folk, and spoil the land."

10

And when she came to Almesbury she spake
There to the nuns, and said, "Mine enemies
Pursue me, but, O peaceful Sisterhood,
Receive, and yield me sanctuary, nor ask
Her name to whom ye yield it, till her time
To tell you:" and her beauty, grace, and power
Wrought as a charm upon them, and they spar'd
To ask it.

So the stately Queen abode
For many a week, unknown, among the nuns;
Nor with them mix'd, nor told her name, nor sought, 20
Wrapt in her grief, for housel or for shrift,
But commun'd only with the little maid,
Who pleas'd her with a babbling heedlessness
Which often lur'd her from herself; but now,
This night, a rumour wildly blown about
Came, that Sir Modred had usurp'd the realm,
And leagued him with the heathen, while the King
Was waging war on Lancelot: then she thought,
"With what a hate the people and the King
Must hate me!" and bow'd down upon her hands 30
Silent, until the little maid, who brook'd
No silence, brake it, uttering, "Late! so late!
What hour, I wonder, now?" and when she drew
No answer, by-and-by began to hum
An air the nuns had taught her: "Late, so late!"
Which when she heard, the Queen look'd up, and
said:
"O maiden, if indeed ye list to sing,

Sing, and unbind my heart that I may weep."
Whereat full willingly sang the little maid.

"Late, late, so late! and dark the night and chill!
Late, late, so late! but we can enter still.
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

"No light had we: for that we do repent;
And learning this, the bridegroom will relent.
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

"No light: so late! and dark and chill the night!
Oh let us in, that we may find the light!
Too late, too late: ye cannot enter now.

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"Have we not heard the bridegroom is so sweet?
Oh let us in, though late, to kiss his feet!
No, no, too late! ye cannot enter now."

So sang the novice, while full passionately,
Her head upon her hands, remembering
Her thought when first she came, wept the sad
Queen.

Then said the little novice prattling to her:

"Oh pray you, noble lady, weep no more;
But let my words, the words of one so small,
Who knowing nothing knows but to obey,
And if I do not there is penance given—
Comfort your sorrows; for they do not flow
From evil done; right sure am I of that,
Who see your tender grace and stateliness.
But weigh your sorrows with our lord the King's,
And weighing find them less; for gone is he
To wage grim war against Sir Lancelot there,
Round that strong castle where he holds the Queen;
And Modred whom he left in charge of all,
The traitor—Ah, sweet lady, the King's grief
For his own self, and his own Queen, and realm,
Must needs be thrice as great as any of ours.
For me, I thank the saints, I am not great.
For if there ever come a grief to me
I cry my cry in silence, and have done.
None knows it, and my tears have brought me good:
But even were the griefs of little ones
As great as those of great ones, yet this grief

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30

Is added to the griefs the great must bear,
That howsoever much they may desire
Silence, they cannot weep behind a cloud:
As even here they talk at Almesbury
About the good King and his wicked Queen,
And were I such a King with such a Queen,
Well might I wish to veil her wickedness;
But were I such a King, it could not be."

Then to her own sad heart mutter'd the Queen,
"Will the child kill me with her innocent talk?" 10
But openly she answer'd, "Must not I,
If this false traitor have displac'd his lord,
Grieve with the common grief of all the realm?"

"Yea," said the maid, "this is all woman's grief,
That *she* is woman, whose disloyal life
Hath wrought confusion in the Table Round
Which good King Arthur founded, years ago,
With signs and miracles and wonders, there
At Camelot, ere the coming of the Queen."

Then thought the Queen within herself again, 20
"Will the child kill me with her foolish prate?"
But openly she spake and said to her,
"O little maid, shut in by nunnery walls,
What canst thou know of Kings and Tables Round,
Or what of signs and wonders, but the signs
And simple miracles of thy nunnery?"

To whom the little novice garrulously:
"Yea, but I know: the land was full of signs
And wonders ere the coming of the Queen.
So said my father, and himself was knight 30
Of the great Table—at the founding of it;
And rode thereto from Lyonnesse, and he said
That as he rode, an hour or maybe twain
After the sunset, down the coast, he heard
Strange music, and he paus'd, and turning—there,
All down the lonely coast of Lyonnesse,
Each with a beacon-star upon his head,
And with a wild sea-light about his feet,

He saw them—headland after headland flame
Far on into the rich heart of the west:
And in the light the white mermaiden swam,
And strong man-breasted things stood from the sea,
And sent a deep sea-voice through all the land,
To which the little elves of chasm and cleft
Made answer, sounding like a distant horn.
So said my father—yea, and furthermore,
Next morning, while he pass'd the dim-lit woods,
Himself beheld three spirits mad with joy 10
Come dashing down on a tall wayside flower,
That shook beneath them, as the thistle shakes
When three gray linnets wrangle for the seed:
And still at evenings on before his horse
The flickering fairy circle wheel'd and broke
Flying, and link'd again, and wheel'd and broke
Flying, for all the land was full of life.
And when at last he came to Camelot,
A wreath of airy dancers hand-in-hand
Swung round the lighted lantern of the hall; 20
And in the hall itself was such a feast
As never man had dream'd; for every knight
Had whatsoever meat he long'd for serv'd
By hands unseen; and even as he said
Down in the cellars merry bloated things
Shoulder'd the spigot, straddling on the butts
While the wine ran: so glad were spirits and men
Before the coming of the sinful Queen."

Then spake the Queen, and somewhat bitterly:
"Were they so glad? ill prophets were they all, 30
Spirits and men: could none of them foresee,
Not even thy wise father with his signs
And wonders, what has fall'n upon the realm?"

To whom the novice garrulously again:
Yea, one, a bard; of whom my father said,
Full many a noble war-song had he sung,
Ev'n in the presence of an enemy's fleet,
Between the steep cliff and the coming wave;
And many a mystic lay of life and death
Had chanted on the smoky mountain-tops, 40

When round him bent the spirits of the hills
With all their dewy hair blown back like flame :
So said my father—and that night the bard
Sang Arthur's glorious wars, and sang the King
As well-nigh more than man, and rail'd at those
Who call'd him the false son of Gorlois :
For there was no man knew from whence he came ;
But after tempest, when the long wave broke
All down the thundering shores of Bude and Bos,
There came a day as still as heaven, and then 10
They found a naked child upon the sands
Of wild Dundagil by the Cornish sea ;
And that was Arthur ; and they foster'd him
Till he by miracle was approven King :
And that his grave should be a mystery
From all men, like his birth ; and could he find
A woman in her womanhood as great
As he was in his manhood, then, he sang,
The twain together well might change the world.
But even in the middle of his song 20
He falter'd, and his hand fell from the harp,
And pale he turn'd, and reel'd, and would have fall'n,
But that they stay'd him up ; nor would he tell
His vision ; but what doubt that he foresaw
This evil work of Lancelot and the Queen ?”

Then thought the Queen, “Lo ! they have set
her on,
Our simple-seeming Abbess and her nuns,
To play upon me,” and bow'd her head nor spake.
Whereat the novice crying, with clasp'd hands,
Shame on her own garrulity garrulously, 30
Said the good nuns would check her gadding tongue
Full often, “and, sweet lady, if I seem
To vex an ear too sad to listen to me,
Unmannerly, with prattling and the tales
Which my good father told me, check me too,
Nor let me shame my father's memory, one
Of noblest manners, though himself would say
Sir Lancelot had the noblest ; and he died,
Kill'd in a tilt, come next, five summers back,
And left me ; but of others who remain, 40

And of the two first-fam'd for courtesy—
And pray you check me if I ask amiss—
But pray you, which had noblest, while you mov'd
Among them, Lancelot or our lord the King?"

Then the pale Queen look'd up and answer'd her :
"Sir Lancelot, as became a noble knight,
Was gracious to all ladies, and the same
In open battle or the tilting-field
Forbore his own advantage, and the King
In open battle or the tilting-field
Forbore his own advantage, and these two
Were the most nobly-manner'd men of all;
For manners are not idle, but the fruit
Of loyal nature, and of noble mind."

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"Yea," said the maid, "be manners such fair fruit?
Then Lancelot's needs must be a thousandfold
Less noble, being, as all rumour runs,
The most disloyal friend in all the world."

To which a mournful answer made the Queen :
"Oh closed about by narrowing nunnery walls,
What knowest thou of the world, and all its lights
And shadows, all the wealth and all the woe?
If ever Lancelot, that most noble knight,
Were for one hour less noble than himself,
Pray for him that he scape the doom of fire,
And weep for her who drew him to his doom."

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"Yea," said the little novice, "I pray for both;
But I should all as soon believe that his,
Sir Lancelot's, were as noble as the King's,
As I could think, sweet lady, yours would be
Such as they are, were you the sinful Queen."

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So she, like many another babbler, hurt
Whom she would soothe, and harm'd where she
would heal;
For here a sudden flush of wrathful heat
Fir'd all the pale face of the Queen, who cried,
"Such as thou art be never maiden more

For ever ! thou their tool, set on to plague
 And play upon, and harry me, petty spy
 And traitress." When that storm of anger brake
 From Guinevere, aghast the maiden rose,
 White as her veil, and stood before the Queen •
 As tremulously as foam upon the beach
 Stands in a wind, ready to break and fly,
 And when the Queen had added, "Get thee hence,"
 Fled frightened. Then that other left alone
 Sigh'd, and began to gather heart again,
 Saying in herself, "The simple, fearful child
 Meant nothing, but my own too-fearful guilt,
 Simpler than any child, betrays itself.
 But help me, Heaven, for surely I repent.
 For what is true repentance but in thought—
 Not ev'n in inmost thought to think again
 The sins that made the past so pleasant to us:
 And I have sworn never to see him more,
 To see him more."

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And ev'n in saying this,
 Her memory from old habit of the mind
 Went slipping back upon the golden days
 In which she saw him first, when Lancelot came,
 Reputed the best knight and goodliest man,
 Ambassador, to lead her to his lord
 Arthur, and led her forth, and far ahead
 Of his and her retinue moving, they,
 Rapt in sweet talk or lively, all on love
 And sport and tilts and pleasure (for the time
 Was maytime, and as yet no sin was dream'd),
 Rode under groves that look'd a paradise
 Of blossom, over sheets of hyacinth
 That seem'd the heavens upbreking through the
 earth.

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And on from hill to hill, and every day
 Beheld at noon in some delicious dale
 The silk pavilions of King Arthur rais'd
 For brief repast or afternoon repose
 By couriers gone before; and on again,
 Till yet once more ere set of sun they saw
 The Dragon of the great Pendragonship,

That crown'd the state pavilion of the King,
Blaze by the rushing brook or silent well.

But when the Queen immers'd in such a trance,
And moving through the past unconsciously,
Came to that point when first she saw the King
Ride toward her from the city, sigh'd to find
Her journey done, glanc'd at him, thought him cold,
High, self-contain'd, and passionless, not like him,
"Not like my Lancelot"—while she brooded thus
And grew half guilty in her thoughts again, 10
There rode an armed warrior to the doors.
A murmuring whisper through the nunnery ran.
Then on a sudden a cry, "The King." She sat
Stiff-stricken, listening; but when armed feet
Through the long gallery from the outer doors
Rang coming, prone from off her seat she fell,
And grovell'd with her face against the floor:
There with her milkwhite arms and shadowy hair
She made her face a darkness from the King:
And in the darkness heard his armed feet 20
Pause by her; then came silence, then a voice,
Monotonous and hollow like a Ghost's
Denouncing judgment, but though chang'd, the
King's:

"Liest thou here so low, the child of one
I honour'd, happy, dead before thy shame?
Well is it that no child is born of thee.
The children born of thee are sword and fire,
Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws,
The craft of kindred and the Godless hosts
Of heathen swarming o'er the Northern Sea; 30
Whom I, while yet Sir Lancelot, my right arm,
The mightiest of my knights, abode with me,
Have everywhere about this land of Christ
In twelve great battles ruining overthrown.
And knowest thou now from whence I come—
from him,
From waging bitter war with him; and he,
That did not shun to smite me in worse way,
Had yet that grace of courtesy in him left,

He spar'd to lift his hand against the King
Who made him knight: but many a knight was
slain;

And many more, and all his kith and kin
Clave to him, and abode in his own land.
And many more when Modred rais'd revolt,
Forgetful of their troth and fealty, clave
To Modred, and a remnant stays with me.

And of this remnant will I leave a part,
True men who love me still, for whom I live,
To guard thee in the wild hour coming on,
Lest but a hair of this low head be harm'd.
Fear not; thou shalt be guarded till my death.
Howbeit I know, if ancient prophecies
Have err'd not, that I march to meet my doom.

Thou hast not made my life so sweet to me,
That I the King should greatly care to live;
For thou hast spoilt the purpose of my life.
Bear with me for the last time while I show,
Ev'n for thy sake, the sin which thou hast sinn'd.
For when the Roman left us, and their law
Relax'd its hold upon us, and the ways

Were fill'd with rapine, here and there a deed
Of prowess done redress'd a random wrong.

But I was first of all the kings who drew
The knighthood-errant of this realm and all
The realms together under me, their Head,
In that fair Order of my Table Round,

A glorious company, the flower of men,
To serve as model for the mighty world,
And be the fair beginning of a time.

I made them lay their hands in mine and swear
To reverence the King, as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,

To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds,

Until they won her; for indeed I knew
Of no more subtle master under heaven

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Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
Not only to keep down the base in man,
But teach high thought, and amiable words
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
And love of truth, and all that makes a man.
And all this throve until I wedded thee,
Believing, 'lo mine helpmate, one to feel
My purpose and rejoicing in my joy.'
Then came thy shameful sin with Lancelot;
Then came the sin of Tristram and Isolt; 10
Then others, following these my mightiest knights,
And drawing foul ensample from fair names,
Sinn'd also, till the loathsome opposite
Of all my heart had destin'd did obtain.
And all through thee! so that this life of mine
I guard as God's high gift from scathe and wrong,
Not greatly care to lose; but rather think
How sad it were for Arthur, should he live,
To sit once more within his lonely hall,
And miss the wonted number of my knights, 20
And miss to hear high talk of noble deeds
As in the golden days before thy sin.
For which of us, who might be left, could speak
Of the pure heart, nor seem to glance at thee?
And in thy bowers of Camelot or of Usk
Thy shadow still would glide from room to room,
And I should evermore be vex'd with thee
In hanging robe or vacant ornament,
Or ghostly footfall echoing on the stair.
For think not, though thou wouldst not love thy
lord, 30
Thy lord has wholly lost his love for thee.
I am not made of so slight elements.
Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy shame.
I hold that man the worst of public foes
Who either for his own or children's sake,
To save his blood from scandal, lets the wife
Whom he knows false abide and rule the house:
For being through his cowardice allow'd
Her station, taken everywhere for pure,
She like a new disease, unknown to men, 40
Creeps, no precaution us'd, among the crowd,

Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes, and saps
The fealty of our friends, and stirs the pulse
With devil's leaps, and poisons half the young.
Worst of the worst were that man he that reigns!
Better the King's waste hearth and aching heart
Than thou reseated in thy place of light,
The mockery of my people, and their bane."

He paus'd, and in the pause she crept an inch
Nearer, and laid her hands about his feet.
Far off a solitary trumpet blew. 10
Then waiting by the doors the war-horse neigh'd
As at a friend's voice, and he spake again:

"Yet think not that I come to urge thy crimes,
I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,
I, whose vast pity almost makes me die
To see thee, laying there thy golden head,
My pride in happier summers, at my feet.
The wrath which forc'd my thoughts on that fierce
law,

The doom of treason and the flaming death
(When first I learnt thee hidden here), is past. 20
The pang—which while I weigh'd thy heart with
one

Too wholly true to dream untruth in thee,
Made my tears burn—is also past—in part.
And all is past, the sin is sinn'd, and I,
Lo! I forgive thee, as Eternal God
Forgives: do thou for thine own soul the rest.
But how to take last leave of all I loved?
O golden hair, with which I used to play
Not knowing! O imperial-moulded form,
And beauty such as never woman wore, 30
Until it came a kingdom's curse with thee—
I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,
But Lancelot's: nay, they never were the King's.
I cannot take thy hand; that too is flesh,
And in the flesh thou hast sinn'd; and mine own
flesh,

Here looking down on thine polluted, cries,
'I loathe thee:' yet not less, O Guinevere,

For I was ever virgin save for thee,
My love through flesh hath wrought into my life
So far, that my doom is, I love thee still.
Let no man dream but that I love thee still.
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
And so thou lean on our fair Father Christ,
Hereafter in that world where all are pure
We two may meet before high God, and thou
Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know
I am thine husband—not a smaller soul, 10
Nor Lancelot, nor another. Leave me that,
I charge thee, my last hope. Now must I hence.
Through the thick night I hear the trumpet blow:
They summon me their King to lead mine hosts
Far down to that great battle in the west,
Where I must strike against my sister's son,
Leagued with the Lords of the White Horse and
knights
Once mine, and strike him dead, and meet myself
Death, or I know not what mysterious doom.
And thou remaining here wilt learn the event; 20
But hither shall I never come again,
Never lie by thy side; see thee no more—
Farewell!"

And while she grovell'd at his feet,
She felt the King's breath wander o'er her neck,
And in the darkness o'er her fallen head,
Perceiv'd the waving of his hands that bless'd.

Then, listening till those armed steps were gone,
Rose the pale Queen, and in her anguish found
The casement: "peradventure," so she thought,
"If I might see his face, and not be seen." 30
And lo, he sat on horseback at the door!
And near him the sad nuns with each a light
Stood, and he gave them charge about the Queen,
To guard and foster her for evermore.
And while he spake to these his helm was lower'd,
To which for crest the golden dragon clung
Of Britain; so she did not see the face,
Which then was as an angel's, but she saw,

Wet with the mists and smitten by the lights
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship
Blaze, making all the night a steam of fire.
And even then he turn'd; and more and more
The moony vapour rolling round the King,
Who seem'd the phantom of a Giant in it,
Enwound him fold by fold, and made him gray
And grayer, till himself became as mist
Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom.

Then she stretch'd out her arms and cried aloud, 10
"O Arthur!" there her voice brake suddenly,
Then—as a stream that spouting from a cliff
Fails in mid air, but gathering at the base
Re-makes itself, and flashes down the vale—
Went on in passionate utterance:

"Gone—my lord!

Gone through my sin to slay and to be slain!
And he forgave me, and I could not speak.
Farewell? I should have answer'd his farewell
His mercy chok'd me. Gone, my lord the King,
My own true lord! how dare I call him mine? 20
The shadow of another cleaves to me,
And makes me one pollution: he, the King,
Call'd me polluted: shall I kill myself?
What help in that? I cannot kill my sin,
If soul be soul; nor can I kill my shame;
No, nor by living can I live it down.
The days will grow to weeks, the weeks to months,
The months will add themselves and make the years,
The years will roll into the centuries,
And mine will ever be a name of scorn. 30
I must not dwell on that defeat of fame.
Let the world be; that is but of the world.
What else? what hope? I think there was a hope
Except he mock'd me when he spake of hope;
His hope he call'd it; but he never mocks,
For mockery is the fume of little hearts.
And blessed be the King, who hath forgiven
My wickedness to him, and left me hope
That in mine own heart I can live down sin

And be his mate hereafter in the heavens
 Before high God. Ah, great and gentle lord,
 Who wast, as is the conscience of a saint
 Among his warring senses, to thy knights—
 To whom my false voluptuous pride, that took
 Full easily all impressions from below,
 Would not look up, or half-despis'd the height
 To which I would not or I could not climb—
 I thought I could not breathe in that fine air
 That pure severity of perfect light— 10
 I wanted warmth and colour which I found
 In Lancelot—now I see thee what thou art:
 Thou art the highest and most human too,
 Not Lancelot, nor another. Is there none
 Will tell the King I love him though so late?
 Now—ere he goes to the great Battle? none:
 Myself must tell him in that purer life,
 But now it were too daring. Ah, my God,
 What might I not have made of thy fair world,
 Had I but lov'd thy highest creature here? 20
 It was my duty to have lov'd the highest:
 It surely was my profit had I known:
 It would have been my pleasure had I seen.
 We needs must love the highest when we see it,
 Not Lancelot, nor another."

Here her hand

Grasp'd, made her veil her eyes: she look'd and saw
 The novice, weeping, suppliant, and said to her,
 "Yea, little maid, for am *I* not forgiven?"
 Then glancing up beheld the holy nuns
 All round her, weeping; and her heart was loos'd 30
 Within her, and she wept with these and said:

"Ye know me then, that wicked one, who broke
 The vast design and purpose of the King.
 Oh shut me round with narrowing nunnery walls,
 Meek maidens, from the voices crying 'shame.'
 I must not scorn myself: he loves me still.
 Let no one dream but that he loves me still.
 So let me, if you do not shudder at me,
 Nor shun to call me sister, dwell with you;

Wear black and white, and be a nun like you,
Fast with your fasts, not feasting with your feasts;
Grieve with your griefs, not grieving at your joys,
But not rejoicing; mingle with your rites;
Pray and be pray'd for; lie before your shrines;
Do each low office of your holy house;
Walk your dim cloister, and distribute dole
To poor sick people, richer in His eyes
Who ransom'd us, and haler too than I;
And treat their loathsome hurts and heal mine own; 10
And so wear out in almsdeed and in prayer
The sombre close of that voluptuous day,
Which wrought the ruin of my lord the King."

She said: they took her to themselves; and she
Still hoping, fearing "is it yet too late?"
Dwelt with them, till in time their Abbess died.
Then she, for her good deeds and her pure life,
And for the power of ministration in her,
And likewise for the high rank she had borne,
Was chosen Abbess, there, an Abbess, liv'd 20
For three brief years, and there, an Abbess, pass'd
To where beyond these voices there is peace.

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR

That story which the bold Sir Bedivere,
First made and latest left of all the knights,
Told, when the man was no more than a voice
In the white winter of his age, to those
With whom he dwelt, new faces, other minds.

For on their march to westward, Bedivere,
Who slowly paced among the slumbering host,
Heard in his tent the moanings of the King:

30

"I found Him in the shining of the stars,
I mark'd Him in the flowering of His fields,
But in His ways with men I find Him not.
I waged His wars, and now I pass and die.
O me! for why is all around us here
As if some lesser god had made the world,

But had not force to shape it as he would,
 Till the High God behold it from beyond,
 And enter it, and make it beautiful?
 Or else as if the world were wholly fair,
 But that these eyes of men are dense and dim,
 And have not power to see it as it is:
 Perchance, because we see not to the close;—
 For I, being simple, thought to work His will,
 And have but stricken with the sword in vain;
 And all whereon I lean'd in wife and friend
 Is traitor to my peace, and all my realm
 Reels back into the beast, and is no more.
 My God, thou hast forgotten me in my death:
 Nay—God my Christ—I pass but shall not die.”

10

Then, ere that last weird battle in the west,
 There came on Arthur sleeping, Gawain kill'd
 In Lancelot's war, the ghost of Gawain blown
 Along a wandering wind, and past his ear
 Went shrilling, "Hollow, hollow all delight!
 Hail, King! to-morrow thou shalt pass away.
 Farewell! there is an isle of rest for thee.
 And I am blown along a wandering wind,
 And hollow, hollow, hollow all delight."
 And fainter onward, like wild birds that change
 Their season in the night and wail their way
 From cloud to cloud, down the long wind the dream
 Shrill'd; but in going mingled with dim cries
 Far in the moonlit haze among the hills,
 As of some lonely city sack'd by night,
 When all is lost, and wife and child with wail
 Pass to new lords; and Arthur woke and call'd,
 "Who spake? A dream. O light upon the wind,
 Thine, Gawain, was the voice—are these dim cries
 Thine? or doth all that haunts the waste and wild
 Mourn, knowing it will go along with me?"

20

30

This heard the bold Sir Bedivere and spake:
 "O me, my King, let pass whatever will,
 Elves, and the harmless glamour of the field;
 But in their stead thy name and glory cling
 To all high places like a golden cloud

40

For ever: but as yet thou shalt not pass.
Light was Gawain in life, and light in death
Is Gawain, for the ghost is as the man;
And care not thou for dreams from him, but rise—
I hear the steps of Modred in the west,
And with him many of thy people, and knights
Once thine, whom thou hast loved, but grosser grown
Than heathen, spitting at their vows and thee.
Right well in heart they know thee for the King.
Arise, go forth and conquer as of old.” 10

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
“Far other is this battle in the west
Whereto we move, than when we strove in youth,
And brake the petty kings, and fought with Rome,
Or thrust the heathen from the Roman wall,
And shook him thro’ the north. Ill doom is mine
To war against my people and my knights.
The king who fights his people fights himself.
And they my knights, who loved me once, the stroke
That strikes them dead is as my death to me. 20
Yet let us hence, and find or feel a way
Thro’ this blind haze, which ever since I saw
One lying in the dust at Almesbury,
Hath folded in the passes of the world.”

Then rose the King and moved his host by night,
And ever push’d Sir Modred, league by league,
Back to the sunset bound of Lyonesse—
A land of old upheaven from the abyss
By fire, to sink into the abyss again;
Where fragments of forgotten peoples dwelt, 30
And the long mountains ended in a coast
Of ever-shifting sand, and far away
The phantom circle of a moaning sea.
There the pursuer could pursue no more,
And he that fled no further fly the King;
And there, that day when the great light of heaven
Burn’d at his lowest in the rolling year,
On the waste sand by the waste sea they closed.
Nor ever yet had Arthur fought a fight
Like this last, dim, weird battle of the west. 40

A deathwhite mist slept over sand and sea :
Whereof the chill, to him who breathed it, drew
Down with his blood, till all his heart was cold
With formless fear ; and ev'n on Arthur fell

Confusion, since he saw not whom he fought.
For friend and foe were shadows in the mist,
And friend slew friend not knowing whom he slew ;
And some had visions out of golden youth,
And some beheld the faces of old ghosts
Look in upon the battle ; and in the mist 10
Was many a noble deed, many a base,
And chance and craft and strength in single fights,
And ever and anon with host to host
Shocks, and the splintering spear, the hard mail
hewn,
Shield-breakings, and the clash of brands, the crash
Of battleaxes on shatter'd helms, and shrieks
After the Christ, of those who falling down
Look'd up for heaven, and only saw the mist ;
And shouts of heathen and the traitor knights,
Oaths, insult, filth, and monstrous blasphemies, 20
Sweat, writhings, anguish, labouring of the lungs
In that close mist, and cryings for the light,
Moans of the dying, and voices of the dead.

Last, as by some one deathbed after wail
Of suffering, silence follows, or thro' death
Or deathlike swoon, thus over all that shore,
Save for some whisper of the seething seas,
A dead hush fell ; but when the dolorous day
Grew drearier toward twilight falling, came
A bitter wind, clear from the North, and blew 30
The mist aside, and with that wind the tide
Rose, and the pale King glanced across the field
Of battle : but no man was moving there ;
Nor any cry of Christian heard thereon,
Nor yet of heathen ; only the wan wave
Brake in among dead faces, to and fro
Swaying the helpless hands, and up and down
Tumbling the hollow helmets of the fallen,
And shiver'd brands that once had fought with Rome,

And rolling far along the gloomy shores
The voice of days of old and days to be.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere,
And whiter than the mist that all day long
Had held the field of battle was the King:

“Hearest thou this great voice that shakes the
world,
And wastes the narrow realm whereon we move,
And beats upon the faces of the dead,
My dead, as tho’ they had not died for me?—
O Bedivere, for on my heart hath fall’n 10
Confusion, till I know not what I am,
Nor whence I am, nor whether I be King.
Behold, I seem but King among the dead.”

Then spake the bold Sir Bedivere: “My King,
King everywhere! and so the dead have kings,
There also will I worship thee as King.
Yet still thy life is whole, and still I live
Who love thee; but who hates thee, he that brought
The heathen back among us, yonder stands,
Modred, unharm’d, the traitor of thine house.” 20

Then spake the King: “My house hath been my
doom.
But call not thou this traitor of my house
Who hath but dwelt beneath one roof with me.
My house are rather they who sware my vows,
Yea, even while they brake them, own’d me King.
And well for thee, saying in my dark hour,
When all the purport of my throne hath fail’d,
That quick or dead thou holdest me for King.
King am I, whatsoever be their cry;
And one last act of kinghood shalt thou see 30
Yet, ere I pass.” And uttering this the King
Made at the man: then Modred smote his liege
Hard on that helm which many a heathen sword
Had beaten thin; while Arthur at one blow,
Striking the last stroke with Excalibur,
Slew him, and all but slain himself, he fell.

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
Among the mountains by the winter sea;
Until King Arthur's Table, man by man,
Had fall'n in Lyonesse about their lord,
King Arthur. Then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land:
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

10

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
"The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more; but, let what will be, be,
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride: for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I row'd across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king;
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known:
But now delay not: take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere:
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word."

20

30

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:
"It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm—

40

A little thing may harm a wounded man ;
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word."

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept,
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

10

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt:
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw : but at the last it seem'd
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
There in the many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded King.

20

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
"Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave?
What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag."

30

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale:
"Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as besem'd
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight:
For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.

This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
 Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again,
 As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
 I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word."

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
 Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
 Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought;
 But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
 How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
 His palms together, and he cried aloud:

10

"And if indeed I cast the brand away,
 Surely a precious thing, one worthy note.
 Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
 Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
 What good should follow this, if this were done?
 What harm, undone? Deep harm to disobey,
 Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
 Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
 An act unprofitable, against himself?
 The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
 What record, or what relic of my lord
 Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
 And rumours of a doubt? But were this kept,
 Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
 Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
 Saying, 'King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
 Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
 Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
 Upon the hidden bases of the hills.'
 So might some old man speak in the aftertime
 To all the people, winning reverence.
 But now much honour and much fame were lost."

20

30

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
 And hid Excalibur the second time,
 And so strode back slow to the wounded King.

Then spake King Arthur, breathing heavily:
 "What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
"I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds."

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath :
"Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted ! Woe is me !
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights, 10
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt ;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence :
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands."

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged 20
Among the bulrush beds, and clutch'd the sword
And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an
arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the Northern Sea.
So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur :
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm 30
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spake King Arthur, drawing thicker breath :
"Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out : what is it thou hast heard, or seen?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him;
But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him 10
Three times, and drew him under in the mere."

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard:
"My end draws nigh; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die."

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere 20
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words;
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs.

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, "Quick, quick!
I fear it is too late, and I shall die." 30
But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge.
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.
Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang

Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—
And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms,
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
Three Queens with crowns of gold: and from them
rose

A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars, 10
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, "Place me in the barge."
So to the barge they came. There those three Queens
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque and chafed his hands, 20
And call'd him by his name, complaining loud,
And dropping bitter tears against a brow
Striped with dark blood: for all his face was white
And colorless, and like the wither'd moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east;
And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops
Of onset; and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the dais-throne—were parch'd with dust;
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose, 30
Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.
So like a shatter'd column lay the King;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere:
"Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?"

Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?
 For now I see the true old times are dead
 When every morning brought a noble chance,
 And every chance brought out a noble knight.
 Such times have been not since the light that led
 The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
 But now the whole Round Table is dissolved
 Which was an image of the mighty world,
 And I, the last, go forth companionless,
 And the days darken round me, and the years,
 Among new men, strange faces, other minds."

10

And slowly answer'd Arthur from the barge
 "The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
 And God fulfils himself in many ways,
 Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
 Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?
 I have lived my life, and that which I have done
 May He within himself make pure! but thou,
 If thou shouldst never see my face again,
 Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by
 prayer

20

Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
 Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
 For what are men better than sheep or goats
 That nourish a blind life within the brain,
 If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
 Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
 For so the whole round earth is every way
 Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
 But now farewell. I am going a long way
 With these thou seest—if indeed I go
 (For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)—
 To the island-valley of Avilion;
 Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
 Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
 Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns
 And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
 Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."

30

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
 Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan

That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

But when that moan had past for evermore,
The stillness of the dead world's winter dawn
Amazed him, and he groan'd, "The King is gone."
And therewithal came on him the weird rhyme, 10
"From the great deep to the great deep he goes."

Whereat he slowly turn'd and slowly clomb
The last hard footstep of that iron crag;
Thence mark'd the black hull moving yet and cried,
"He passes to be King among the dead,
And after healing of his grievous wound
He comes again; but—if he come no more—
O me, be yon dark Queens in yon black boat,
Who shriek'd and wail'd, the three whereat we gazed
On that high day, when, clothed with living light, 20
They stood before his throne in silence, friends
Of Arthur who should help him at his need?"

Then from the dawn it seem'd there came, but
faint
As from beyond the limit of the world,
Like the last echo born of a great cry,
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice
Around a king returning from his wars.

Thereat once more he moved about, and clomb
Ev'n to the highest he could climb, and saw,
Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand, 30
Or thought he saw, the speck that bare the King
Down that long water opening on the deep
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go
From less to less and vanish into light.
And the new sun rose bringing the new year.

TO THE QUEEN

O Loyal to the royal in thyself,
 And loyal to thy land, as this to thee—
 Bear witness, that rememberable day,
 When, pale as yet, and fever-worn, the Prince
 Who scarce had pluck'd his flickering life again
 From halfway down the shadow of the grave,
 Past with thee thro' thy people and their love,
 And London roll'd one tide of joy thro' all
 Her trebled millions, and loud leagues of man
 And welcome! witness, too, the silent cry, 10
 The prayer of many a race and creed, and clime—
 Thunderless lightnings striking under sea
 From sunset and sunrise of all thy realm,
 And that true North, whereof we lately heard
 A strain to shame us "keep you to yourselves;
 So loyal is too costly! friends—your love
 Is but a burthen: loose the bond, and go."
 Is this the tone of empire? here the faith
 That made us rulers? this, indeed, her voice
 And meaning, whom the roar of Hougoumont 20
 Left mightiest of all peoples under heaven?
 What shock has fool'd her since, that she should
 speak
 So feebly? wealthier—wealthier—hour by hour!
 The voice of Britain, or a sinking land,
 Some third-rate isle half-lost among her seas?
There rang her voice when the full city peal'd
 Thee and thy Prince! The loyal to their crown
 Are loyal to their own far sons, who love
 Our ocean-empire with her boundless homes
 For ever-broadening England, and her throne 30
 In our vast Orient, and one isle, one isle,
 That knows not her own greatness: if she knows
 And dreads it we are fall'n.—But thou, my Queen,
 Not for itself, but thro' thy living love
 For one to whom I made it o'er his grave
 Sacred, accept this old imperfect tale,
 New-old, and shadowing Sense at war with Soul
 Rather than that gray king, whose name, a ghost,

LOCKSLEY HALL SIXTY YEARS AFTER 609

Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain
peak,
And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still ; or him
Of Geoffrey's book, or him of Malleor's, one
Touch'd by the adulterous finger of a time
That hover'd between war and wantonness,
And crownings and dethronements : take withal
Thy poet's blessing, and his trust that Heaven
Will blow the tempest in the distance back
From thine and ours : for some are sacred, who mark,
Or wisely or unwisely, signs of storm, 10
Waverings of every vane with every wind,
And wordy trucklings to the transient hour,
And fierce or careless looseners of the faith,
And Softness breeding scorn of simple life,
Or Cowardice, the child of lust for gold,
Or Labour with a groan and not a voice,
Or Art with poisonous honey stol'n from France,
And that which knows, but careful for itself,
And that which knows not, ruling that which knows
To its own harm : the goal of this great world 20
Lies beyond sight : yet—if our slowly-grown
And crown'd Republic's crowning common-sense,
That saved her many times, not fail—their fears
Are morning shadows huger than the shapes
That cast them, not those gloomier which forego
The darkness of that battle in the West,
Where all of high and holy dies away.

LOCKSLEY HALL

SIXTY YEARS AFTER

Late, my grandson ! half the morning have I paced
these sandy tracts,
Watch'd again the hollow ridges roaring into cata-
racts,

Wander'd back to living boyhood while I heard the 30
curlews call,
I myself so close on death, and death itself in Locks-
ley Hall.

So—your happy suit was blasted—she the faultless,
the divine;
And you liken—boyish babble—this boy-love of
yours with mine.

I myself have often babbled doubtless of a foolish
past;
Babble, babble; our old England may go down in
babble at last.

“Curse him!” curse your fellow-victim? call him
dotard in your rage?
Eyes that lured a doting boyhood well might fool a
dotard’s age.

Jilted for a wealthier! wealthier? yet perhaps she
was not wise;
I remember how you kiss’d the miniature with those
sweet eyes.

In the hall there hangs a painting—Amy’s arms
about my neck—
Happy children in a sunbeam sitting on the ribs of 10
wreck.

In my life there was a picture, she that clasp’d my
neck had flown;
I was left within the shadow sitting on the wreck
alone.

Yours has been a slighter ailment, will you sicken
for her sake?
You, not you! your modern amourist is of easier,
earthlier make.

Amy loved me, Amy fail’d me, Amy was a timid
child;
But your Judith—but your worldling—*she* had never
driven me wild.

She that holds the diamond necklace dearer than the
golden ring,

LOCKSLEY HALL SIXTY YEARS AFTER 611

She that finds a winter sunset fairer than a morn
of Spring.

She that in her heart is brooding on his briefer lease
of life,

While she vows 'till death shall part us,' she the
would-be-widow wife.

She the worldling born of worldlings—father,
mother—be content,

Ev'n the homely farm can teach us there is some-
thing in descent.

Yonder in that chapel, slowly sinking now into the
ground,

Lies the warrior, my forefather, with his feet upon
the hound.

Cross'd! for once he sail'd the sea to crush the Mos-
lem in his pride;

Dead the warrior, dead his glory, dead the cause in
which he died.

Yet how often I and Amy in the mouldering aisle ¹⁰
have stood,

Gazing for one pensive moment on that founder of
our blood.

There again I stood to-day, and where of old we
knelt in prayer,

Close beneath the casement crimson with the shield
of Locksley—there,

All in white Italian marble, looking still as if she
smiled,

Lies my Amy dead in child-birth, dead the mother,
dead the child.

Dead—and sixty years ago, and dead her aged hus-
band now—

I this old white-headed dreamer stoopt and kiss'd
her marble brow.

Gone the fires of youth, the follies, furies, curses,
passionate tears,
Gone like fires and floods and earthquakes of the
planet's dawning years.

Fires that shook me once, but now to silent ashes
fall'n away.
Cold upon the dead volcano sleeps the gleam of
dying day.

Gone the tyrant of my youth, and mute below the
chancel stones,
All his virtues—I forgive them—black in white above
his bones.

Gone the comrades of my bivouac, some in fight
against the foe,
Some thro' age and slow diseases, gone as all on
earth will go.

Gone with whom for forty years my life in golden
sequence ran,
She with all the charm of woman, she with all the
breadth of man,

Strong in will and rich in wisdom, Edith, yet so
lowly-sweet,
Woman to her inmost heart, and woman to her ten-
der feet,

Very woman of very woman, nurse of ailing body
and mind,
She that link'd again the broken chain that bound
me to my kind.

Here to-day was Amy with me, while I wander'd
down the coast,
Near us Edith's holy shadow, smiling at the slighter
ghost.

LOCKSLEY HALL SIXTY YEARS AFTER 613

Gone our sailor son thy father, Leonard early lost
at sea;

Thou alone, my boy, of Amy's kin and mine art
left to me.

Gone thy tender-natured mother, wearying to be left
alone,

Pining for the stronger heart that once had beat be-
side her own.

Truth, for Truth is Truth, he worshipt, being true
as he was brave;

Good, for Good is Good, he follow'd, yet he look'd
beyond the grave,

Wiser there than you, that crowning barren Death
as lord of all,

Deem this over-tragic drama's closing curtain is the
pall!

Beautiful was death in him, who saw the death, but
kept the deck,

Saving women and their babes, and sinking with the 10
sinking wreck,

Gone for ever! Ever? no—for since our dying race
began,

Ever, ever, and for ever was the leading light of
man.

Those that in barbarian burials kill'd the slave and
slew the wife

Felt within themselves the sacred passion of the
second life.

Indian warriors dream of ampler hunting grounds
beyond the night;

Ev'n the black Australian dying hopes he shall re-
turn, a white.

Truth for truth, and good for good! The Good, the
True, the Pure, the Just—

Take the charm "For ever" from them, and they
crumble into dust.

Gone the cry of "Forward, Forward," lost within a
growing gloom;
Lost, or only heard in silence from the silence of a
tomb.

Half the marvels of my morning, triumphs over
time and space,
Staled by frequency, shrunk by usage, into com-
monest commonplace!

"Forward" rang the voices then, and of the many
mine was one.
Let us hush this cry of "Forward" till ten thousand
years have gone.

Far among the vanish'd races, old Assyrian kings
would flay
Captives whom they caught in battle—iron-hearted
victors they.

Ages after, while in Asia, he that led the wild Mo- 10
guls,
Timur built his ghastly tower of eighty thousand
human skulls,

Then, and here in Edward's time, an age of noblest
English names,
Christian conquerors took and flung the conquer'd
Christian into flames.

Love your enemy, bless your haters, said the Greatest
of the great;
Christian love among the Churches look'd the twin
of heathen hate.

From the golden alms of Blessing man had coin'd
himself a curse:

LOCKSLEY HALL SIXTY YEARS AFTER 615
Rome of Caesar, Rome of Peter, which was cruel-
ler? which was worse?

France had shown a light to all men, preach'd a
Gospel, all men's good;
Celtic Demos rose a Demon, shriek'd and slaked the
light with blood.

Hope was ever on her mountain, watching till the
day begun—
Crown'd with sunlight — over darkness — from the
still unrisen sun,

Have we grown at last beyond the passions of the
primal clan?
"Kill your enemy, for you hate him," still, "your
enemy" was a man.

Have we sunk below them? peasants maim the help-
less horse, and drive
Innocent cattle under thatch, and burn the kindlier
brutes alive.

Brutes, the brutes are not your wrongers—burnt at 10
midnight, found at morn,
Twisted hard in mortal agony with their offspring,
born-unborn,

Clinging to the silent mother! Are we devils? are
we men?
Sweet St. Francis of Assisi, would that he were here
again,

He that in his Catholic wholeness used to call the
very flowers
Sisters, brothers—and the beasts—whose pains are
hardly less than ours!

Chaos, Cosmos! Cosmos, Chaos! who can tell how
all will end?
Read the wide world's annals, you, and take their
wisdom for your friend.

Hope the best, but hold the Present fatal daughter
of the Past,
Shape your heart to front the hour, but dream not
that the hour will last.

Ay, if dynamite and revolver leave your courage to
be wise:

When was age so cramm'd with menace? madness?
written, spoken lies?

Envy wears the mask of Love, and, laughing sober
fact to scorn,
Cries to Weakest as to Strongest, "Ye are equals,
equal-born."

Equal-born? O yes, if yonder hill be level with the
flat.

Charm us, Orator, till the Lion look no larger than
the Cat,

Till the Cat thro' that mirage of overheated language
loom

Larger than the Lion,—Demos end in working its ¹⁰
own doom.

Russia bursts our Indian barrier, shall we fight her?
shall we yield?

Pause! before you sound the trumpet, hear the voices
from the field.

Those three hundred millions under one Imperial
sceptre now,

Shall we hold them? shall we loose them? take the
suffrage of the plow.

Nay, but these would feel and follow Truth, if only
you and you,

Rivals of realm-ruining party, when you speak were
wholly true.

LOCKSLEY HALL SIXTY YEARS AFTER 617
Plowman, Shepherds, have I found, and more than
once, and still could find,
Sons of God, and kings of men in utter nobleness
of mind,

Truthful, trustful, looking upward to the practised
hustings-liar;
So the Higher wields the Lower, while the Lower
is the Higher.

Here and there a cotter's babe is royal-born by right
divine;
Here and there my lord is lower than his oxen or his
swine.

Chaos, Cosmos! Cosmos, Chaos! once again the
sickening game;
Freedom, free to slay herself, and dying while they
shout her name.

Step by step we gain'd a freedom known to Europe,
known to all;
Step by step we rose to greatness,—thro' the tongue- 10
sters we may fall.

You that woo the Voices—tell them “old experience
is a fool,”
Teach your flatter'd kings that only those who cannot
read can rule.

Pluck the mighty from their seat, but set no meek
ones in their place;
Pillory Wisdom in your markets, pelt your offal
at her face.

Tumble Nature heel o'er head, and, yelling with the
yelling street,
Set the feet above the brain and swear the brain is
in the feet.

Bring the old dark ages back without the faith,
without the hope,

Break the State, the Church, the Throne, and roll
their ruins down the slope.

Authors—essayist, atheist, novelist, realist, rhyme-
ster, play your part,
Paint the mortal shame of nature with the living
hues of Art.

Rip your brothers' vices open, strip your own foul
passions bare;
Down with Reticence, down with Reverence—for-
ward—naked—let them stare.

Feed the budding rose of boyhood with the drainage
of your sewer;
Send the drain into the fountain, lest the stream
should issue pure.

Set the maiden fancies wallowing in the troughs of
Zolaism, —
Forward, forward, ay and backward, downward too
into the abysm.

Do your best to charm the worst, to lower the rising 10
race of men;
Have we risen from out the beast, then back into
the beast again?

Only "dust to dust" for me that sicken at your law-
less din,
Dust in wholesome old-world dust before the newer
world begin.

Heated am I? you—you wonder—well, it scarce be-
comes mine age—
Patience! let the dying actor mouth his last upon the
stage.

Cries of unprogressive dotage ere the dotard fall
asleep?
Noises of a current narrowing, not the music of a
deep?

LOCKSLEY HALL SIXTY YEARS AFTER 619

Ay, for doubtless I am old, and think gray thoughts,
for I am gray:
After all the stormy changes shall we find a change-
less May?

After madness, after massacre, Jacobinism and Jac-
querie,
Some diviner force to guide us thro' the days I shall
not see?

When the schemes and all the systems, Kingdoms
and Republics fall,
Something kindlier, higher, holier—all for each and
each for all?

All the full-brain, half-brain races, led by Justice,
Love, and Truth;
All the millions one at length with all the visions of
my youth?

All diseases quench'd by Science, no man halt or
deaf or blind;
Stronger ever born of weaker, lustier body, larger 10
mind?

Earth at last a warless world, a single race, a single
tongue—
I have seen her far away—for is not Earth as yet
so young?—

Every tiger madness muzzled, every serpent passion
kill'd,
Every grim ravine a garden, every blazing desert
till'd,

Robed in universal harvest up to either pole she
smiles,
Universal ocean softly washing all her warless Isles.

Warless? when her tens are thousands, and her thou-
sands millions, then—

All her harvest all too narrow—who can fancy war-
less men?

Warless? war will die out late then. Will it ever?
late or soon?

Can it, till this outworn earth be dead as yon dead
world the moon?

Dead the new astronomy calls her. . . . On this
day and at this hour

In this gap between the sandhills, whence you see
the Locksley tower,

Here we met, our latest meeting—Amy—sixty years
ago—

She and I—the moon was falling greenish thro' a
rosy glow,

Just above the gateway tower, and even where you
see her now—

Here we stood and claspt each other, swore the
seeming-deathless vow—

Dead, but how her living glory lights the hall, the 10
dune, the grass!

Yet the moonlight is the sunlight, and the Sun him-
self will pass.

Venus near her! smiling downward at this earthlier
earth of ours,

Closer on the Sun, perhaps a world of never fading
flowers.

Hesper, whom the poet call'd the Bringer home of
all good things.

All good things may move in Hesper, perfect peo-
ples, perfect kings.

Hesper—Venus—were we native to that splendour
or in Mars,

We should see the Globe we groan in, fairest of their
evening stars.

LOCKSLEY HALL SIXTY YEARS AFTER 621

Could we dream of wars and carnage, craft and
madness, lust and spite,
Roaring London, raving Paris, in that point of peace-
ful light?

Might we not in glancing heavenward on a star so
silver-fair,
Yearn, and clasp the hands and murmur, "Would to
God that we were there"?

Forward, backward, backward, forward, in the im-
measurable sea,
Sway'd by vaster ebbs and flows than can be known
to you or me.

All the suns—are these but symbols of innumerable
man,
Man or Mind that sees a shadow of the planner
or the plan?

Is there evil but on earth? or pain in every peopled
sphere?
Well be grateful for the sounding watchword "Evo- 10
lution" here,

Evolution ever climbing after some ideal good,
And Reversion ever dragging Evolution in the mud.

What are men that He should heed us? cried the
king of sacred song;
Insects of an hour, that hourly work their brother
insect wrong,

While the silent Heavens roll, and Suns along their
fiery way,
All their planets whirling round them, flash a mil-
lion miles a day.

Many an Æon moulded earth before her highest,
man, was born,
Many an Æon too may pass when earth is manless
and forlorn,

Earth so huge, and yet so bounded—pools of salt,
and plots of land—
Shallow skin of green and azure—chains of moun-
tain, grains of sand!

Only That which made us, meant us to be mightier
by and by,
Set the sphere of all the boundless Heavens within
the human eye,

Sent the shadow of Himself, the boundless, thro'
the human soul;
Boundless inward, in the atom, boundless outward,
in the Whole.

* * * * *

Here is Locksley Hall, my grandson, here the lion-
guarded gate.
Not to-night in Locksley Hall—to-morrow—you,
you come so late.

Wreck'd—your train—or all but wreck'd? a shat-
ter'd wheel? a vicious boy!
Good, this forward, you that reach it, is it well to 10
wish you joy?

Is it well that while we range with Science, glorying
in the Time,
City children soak and blacken soul and sense in city
slime?

There among the glooming alleys Progress halts on
palsied feet,
Crime and hunger cast our maidens by the thousand
on the street.

There the Master scrimps his haggard sempstress of
her daily bread,
There a single sordid attic holds the living and the
dead.

LOCKSLEY HALL SIXTY YEARS AFTER 623

There the smouldering fire of fever creeps across the
rotted floor,
And the crowded couch of incest in the warrens of
the poor.

Nay, your pardon, cry your "forward," yours are
hope and youth, but I—
Eighty winters leave the dog too lame to follow with
the cry,

Lame and old, and past his time, and passing now
into the night;
Yet I would the rising race were half as eager for
the light.

Light the fading gleam of Even? light the glimmer
of the dawn?
Aged eyes may take the growing glimmer for the
gleam withdrawn.

Far away beyond her myriad coming changes earth
will be
Something other than the wildest modern guess of 10
you and me.

Earth may reach her earthly-worst or if she gain her
earthly-best,
Would she find her human offspring this ideal man
at rest?

Forward then, but still remember how the course
of Time will swerve,
Crook and turn upon itself in many a backward
streaming curve.

Not the Hall to-night, my grandson! Death and
Silence hold their own.
Leave the Master in the first dark hour of his last
sleep alone.

Worthier soul was he than I am, sound and honest,
rustic Squire,

Kindly landlord, boon companion—youthful jealousy
is a liar.

Cast the poison from your bosom, oust the madness
from your brain.

Let the trampled serpent show you that you have
not lived in vain.

Youthful! youth and age are scholars yet but in the
lower school,

Nor is he the wisest man who never proved himself
a fool.

Yonder lies our young sea-village—Art and Grace
are less and less:

Science grows and Beauty dwindles—roofs of slated
hideousness!

There is one old Hostel left us where they swing the
Locksley shield,

Till the peasant cow shall butt the “Lion passant”
from his field.

Poor old Heraldry, poor old History, poor old 10
Poetry, passing hence,

In the common deluge drowning old political com-
mon-sense!

Poor old voice of eighty crying after voices that have
fled!

All I loved are vanish'd voices, all my steps are on
the dead.

All the world is ghost to me, and the phantom dis-
appears,

Forward far and far from here is all the hope of
eighty years.

* * * * *

In this Hostel—I remember—I repent it o'er his
grave—

LOCKSLEY HALL SIXTY YEARS AFTER 625

Like a clown—by chance he met me—I refused the
hand he gave.

From that casement where the trailer mantles all the
mouldering bricks—

I was then in early boyhood, Edith but a child of
six—

While I shelter'd in this archway from a day of
driving showers—

Peep't the winsome face of Edith like a flower among
the flowers.

Here to-night! the Hall to-morrow, when they toll
the Chapel bell!

Shall I hear in one dark room a wailing, "I have
loved thee well?"

Then a peal that shakes the portal—one has come to
claim his bride,

Her than shrank, and put me from her, shriek'd, and
started from my side—

Silent echoes! You, my Leonard, use and not abuse ¹⁰
your day,

Move among your people, know them, follow him
who led the way.

Strove for sixty widow'd years to help his homlier
brother men,

Served the poor, and built the cottage, raised the
school, and drain'd the fen.

Hears he now the Voice that wrong'd him? who
shall swear it cannot be?

Earth would never touch her worst, were one in
fifty such as he.

Ere she gain her Heavenly-best, a God must mingle
with the game:

Nay, there may be those about us whom we neither
see nor name,

Felt within us as ourselves, the Powers of Good, the
Powers of Ill,
Strowing balm or shedding poison in the fountains
of the Will.

Follow you the Star that lights a desert pathway,
yours or mine.
Forward, till you see the highest Human Nature is
divine.

Follow Light, and do the Right—for man can half-
control his doom—
Till you find the deathless Angel seated in the vacant
tomb.

Forward, let the stormy moment fly and mingle with
the Past.
I that loathed, have come to love him. Love will
conquer at the last.

Gone at eighty, mine own age, and I and you will 10
bear the pall;
Then I leave thee Lord and Master, latest Lord of
Locksley Hall.

MERLIN AND THE GLEAM

I

O Young Mariner,
You from the haven
Under the sea-cliff,
You that are watching
The gray Magician
With eyes of wonder,
I am Merlin,
And *I* am dying,
I am Merlin
Who follow The Gleam.

II

Mighty the Wizard
Who found me at sunrise
Sleeping, and woke me
And learn'd me Magic!
Great the Master,
And sweet the Magic,
When over the valley,
In early summers,
Over the mountain,
On human faces,
And all around me,
Moving to melody,
Floated The Gleam.

10

III

Once at the croak of a Raven
 who crost it,
A barbarous people,
Blind to the magic,
And deaf to the melody,
Snarl'd at and crushed me.
A demon vext me,
The light retreated,
The landskip darken'd,
The melody deaden'd,
The Master whisper'd,
"Follow The Gleam."

20

IV

Then to the melody,
Over a wilderness
Gliding, and glancing at
Elf of the woodland,
Gnome of the cavern,
Griffin and Giant,
And dancing of Fairies
In desolate hollows,

30

And wraiths of the mountain,
And rolling of dragons
By warble of water,
Or cataract music
Of falling torrents,
Flitted The Gleam.

V

Down from the mountain
And over the level,
And streaming and shining on
Silent river, 10
Silvery willow,
Pasture and plowland,
Innocent maidens,
Garrulous children,
Homestead and harvest,
Reaper and gleaner,
And rough-ruddy faces
Of lowly labour,
Slided The Gleam—

VI

Then, with a melody 20
Stronger and statelier,
Led me at length
To the city and palace
Of Arthur the King;
Touch'd at the golden
Cross of the churches,
Flash'd on the Tournament,
Flicker'd and bicker'd
From helmet to helmet,
And last on the forehead 30
Of Arthur the blameless
Rested The Gleam.

VII

Clouds and darkness
Closed upon Camelot;
Arthur had vanish'd
I knew not whither,
The king who loved me,
And cannot die;
For out of the darkness
Silent and slowly
The Gleam, that had waned to a
wintry glimmer
On icy fallow
And faded forest,
Drew to the valley
Named of the shadow,
And slowly brightening
Out of the glimmer,
And slowly moving again to a
melody
Yearningly tender,
Fell on the shadow,
No longer a shadow,
But clothed with The Gleam.

10

20

VIII

And broader and brighter
The Gleam flying onward,
Wed to the melody,
Sang thro' the world;
And slower and fainter,
Old and weary,
But eager to follow,
I saw, whenever
In passing it glanced upon
Hamlet or city,
That under the Crosses
The dead man's garden,
The mortal hillock,
Would break into blossom

30

And so to the land's
 Last limit I came—
 And can no longer,
 But die rejoicing,
 For thro' the Magic
 Of Him the Mighty,
 Who taught me in childhood,
 There on the border
 Of boundless Ocean,
 And all but Heaven
 Hovers The Gleam.

10

IX

Not of the sunlight,
 Not of the moonlight,
 Not of the starlight!
 O young Mariner,
 Down to the haven,
 Call your companions,
 Launch your vessel,
 And crowd your canvas,
 And, ere it vanishes
 Over the margin,
 After it, follow it,
 Follow The Gleam.

20

CROSSING THE BAR

Sunset and evening star,
 And one clear call for me!
 And may there be no moaning of the bar,
 When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
 Too full for sound and foam,
 When that which drew from out the
 boundless deep
 Turns again home.

30

Twilight and evening bell,
 And after that the dark!

And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time
and Place

The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

*Contrasting Browning's
"Prospect" as a lively,
a essentially optimistic
approach to death.*

NOTES AND COMMENTS

TO THE QUEEN, 1851

"This laurel greener from the brows——." Tennyson had in 1850, been made Poet Laureate, succeeding Wordsworth, who is referred to in the line, "one that uttered nothing base."

For an earlier version of the poem see Jones, *The Growth of the Idylls of the King*, Phil., 1895, 152. Nine of the thirteen stanzas are unlike the stanzas finally published.

CLARIBEL, 1830

From the volume of *Juvenilia* published in 1830. A name chosen for its pleasant sound and literary associations—see *Fairie Queen* and Shakespeare's *Tempest*.

ISABEL, 1830

More or less a description of the Poet's mother, who is also portrayed in the closing lines of the *Princess*:

"Not learned, save in gracious household ways,
Not perfect, nay, but full of tender wants,
No Angel, but a dearer being, all dipt
In Angel instincts, breathing Paradise—
Happy he

With such a Mother!"

MARIANA, 1830

Mariana is a character in *Measure for Measure*, described as deserted by Angelo. The poem was built up by Tennyson from a phrase. A picture of the old "grange" at Somersby may have been in his mind, although this has no trace of a moat.

THE KRAKEN, 1830

Like Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, this poem was the result of the poet's reading. The kraken, a fabulous sea-monster, is described in the *Biographie Universelle*.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS. 1830

Haroun Al-Raschid (763-809) made his court at Bagdad a brilliant center of the wit, learning, and art of the Moslem

world. He was a hero of many tales in the "Arabian Nights." Tennyson had read only a translation from the French, hence some of the detail of his poem.

ODE TO MEMORY, 1830

Note the interesting reference to the Tennyson home at Somersby, and to the brook which crosses the road near by. The brook is referred to again in *In Memoriam* XCIV, second stanza. This *Ode* is one of Tennyson's best early nature poems. It contains an accurate description of the surroundings of his home. The rectory, in which the Tennysons lived, was once the manor house of the Burton family, whose property included Somersby.

THE LADY OF SHALOTT, 1832

This poem was much altered in the 1842 version. For interesting original readings, see W. J. Rolfe, *Poetical Works of Tennyson*, (Cambridge ed.) 1898, 796-7. The conception of the Lady was based upon an Italian romance, the *Donna di Scalotta*, in which Camelot was placed near the sea (contrary to Celtic tradition). For sources of the poem, see *Modern Language Notes*, XVII, 237.

MARIANA IN THE SOUTH, 1832

In a letter to Donne, Hallam said that while he and Tennyson were journeying through Southern France they came upon a range of country which just corresponded to Tennyson's preconceived notion of barrenness—later portrayed in *Mariana in the South*. (See letter of Hallam, *Memoir of Tennyson* by his son, 1897, I, 500-501.) Tennyson himself declared, "The idea (of the poem) came into my head between Narbonne and Perpignon" (that is, on the journey that he and Hallam made to the Pyrenees in 1830, to aid the Spanish patriots).

THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER, 1832

Tennyson said of this poem, "If I thought at all of any mill it was that of Trumpington, near Cambridge." It is interesting to compare this with Rupert Brooke's reference to the same old mill, in the poem *Grantchester*.

ÆNONE, 1832

Part of the poem was written in the Pyrenees, when Hallam and Tennyson were carrying messages and supplies to Ojeda. "The Greek Woman" refers to Helen of Troy. Ænone was married to Paris, who deserted her for Helen.

THE PALACE OF ART, 1832

Addressed in the short introduction to Richard Chevenix Trench, with whom Tennyson had talked of art and its limitations. There were many changes in 1842 version. See A. C. Howell, "Tennyson's 'Palace of Art'—an interpretation." *Studies in Philology*, XXXIII, 507-22.

THE LOTOS-EATERS, 1832

The description derives something from Tennyson's visit to the Pyrenees with Hallam in 1830; the main theme comes from the *Odyssey*. Both the *Fairie Queen* and Thomson's *Castle of Indolence* probably furnished suggestions and atmosphere.

A DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN, 1832

In the 1833 volume the poem began with four stanzas which were omitted from the 1842 edition (*Memoir*, I 121). The "far-renowned brides of ancient song," mentioned in this poem, are: "A Lady within call"—Helen of Troy; "To one that stood beside"—Iphigenia; "A noise of some one coming through the lawn"—Jepthah's daughter (Judges, XI); Fulvia—Anthony's wife; "The captain of my dreams"—Venus, the morning star of the poet's dreams of fair women; "Her who clasped in her last trance"—Margaret Roper, daughter of Sir Thomas More; "Or her who knew that Love can vanquish Death"—Eleanor, queen of Edward I.

THE DEATH OF THE OLD YEAR, 1832

What appears to have been the first draft of this poem was published in an old magazine, *The World of Fashion*, 1833. It was called *The Old Year and the New One*.

TO J. S., 1832

James Spedding was one of the Cambridge "Apostles" and an intimate friend of Tennyson for many years. He was later the biographer of Bacon, and one of Tennyson's stoutest critical champions. Edmund Spedding is the brother referred to. "Once thro' mine own doors," refers to the decease of Tennyson's father March, 1831. The poem may be regarded as the first important example that reveals Tennyson's power to express grief and impart consolation.

ST. AGNES' EVE, (1837) 1842

First published as "St. Agnes" in the *Keepsake*, an illustrated Annual. Republished in its present form in the

second volume of the edition of 1842. The female ascetic is a companion to Galahad.

SIR GALAHAD, 1842

Galahad was not originally a hero of the Grail Quest, but becomes one in the romances of the 13th century. He was known to early story-tellers as the son of Lancelot.

"YOU ASK ME WHY THO' ILL AT EASE," 1842

Written about 1833. Tennyson denied that this and the two following poems ("Of old sat Freedom on the heights" and "Love thou thy Land . . .") were versified from a speech of Spedding's at the Cambridge Union.

ST. SIMEON STYLITES, 1842

To be read of in Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, IV, 320 (Milman-Smith's ed.) and Hone's *Every-Day Book*, I, 35-36.

THE TALKING OAK, 1842

Tennyson called the poem an experiment in testing his power of humanizing nature.

ULYSSES, 1842

Tennyson said this poem expressed more of himself ("written under the sense of loss and that all had gone by, but that still life must be fought out to the end") than many of the verses of *In Memoriam*. He thought of Ulysses as about to take up his wanderings again, in his old age. Carlyle, according to Fitzgerald, liked it best of all the poems in the 1842 edition.

LOCKSLEY HALL, 1842

For an important note on the origin and influence of the metre of *Locksley Hall*, see J. F. A. Pyre, *The Formation of Tennyson's Style, Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature*, XII, Madison, Wisconsin, 1921.

Tennyson maintained that both place and hero were imaginary, but they have been persistently associated with the Lincolnshire coast and himself. Edward Fitzgerald noted that the second and third verses were pictures of the Maplethorpe shore, which Tennyson visited regularly as a child; and it is difficult not to connect vaguely the unhappy experience of the youthful lover and the breaking of his own engagement to Emily Sellwood about 1840. The same hero, in old age, is represented again in *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*.

GODIVA, 1842

For the story on which the poem is founded, see Sir William Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire*, 1656. The story is reprinted with notes in Noyes, *Poetical Works of Tennyson*, 1898, 808-9. Compare Landor's imaginary conversation between Leofric and Godiva. The story is still the municipal legend of Coventry, in Warwickshire, and is frequently celebrated by a festival.

"BREAK, BREAK, 'BREAK,'" 1842

Written in a Lincolnshire lane at five o'clock in the morning. It was probably written soon after Hallam's death.

THE TWO VOICES, 1842

When this poem was first published, the date 1833 was put against it, thus calling attention to its bearing on Hallam's death. The date was omitted in subsequent editions. Originally it had also an alternate title, "Or Thoughts of a Suicide." Hallam Tennyson describes the poem as a portrayal of the conflict between faith and skepticism.

THE GOLDEN YEAR, 1846

This was the only poem added in the fourth edition of the *Poems by Alfred Tennyson*, originally issued in 1842. Tennyson's note on the onomatopoetic last line was: "'Bluff to bluff' gives the echo of the blasting as I heard it from the mountain on the counter side, opposite to Snowden."

LYRICS from THE PRINCESS, 1850

Although *The Princess* was first published in 1847, these intercalary songs, by which the poem is now chiefly valued, were inserted in the third edition. It contained other alterations as well.

"The Splendor Falls on Castle Walls"—This song was said by Tennyson's son to have been written in 1848, after a visit to the Lakes of Killarney. It was suggested by the bugle music of the boatmen (see an article by Anne Ritchie in *Harper's Magazine*, LXVIII, 38).

"Home they brought her warrior dead"—Evidently an adapted form of a song first published in a volume of selections in 1865, and not found in most of the editions of Tennyson's works.

"Tears, idle tears"—Written in the yellowing autumn-tide at Tintern Abbey. It conveys the sense of the abiding in the transient. Tennyson compared it with the sonnet,

"Time and Twilight," by his brother, Charles Tennyson-Turner (*Memoir of Tennyson*, I, 253).

IN MEMORIAM, A.H.H., 1850

The "A.H.H." of the poem was Arthur Henry Hallam, son of the historian, Henry Hallam. He was born in Bedford Square, London, February 1, 1811. At the age of seven he could already read French with ease, owing to residence in France and Switzerland with his family. He also learned Latin very early. When only eight or nine years old he began to write tragedies which showed his precocity. To his relatives and friends he seems always to have been a wonder-child. At Eton he distinguished himself as a debater, and contributed to the *Eton Miscellany*. On leaving this school in 1827, he spent eight months with his parents in Italy, reading in Italian the works of Dante and Petrarch, and later writing sonnets in the Italian language. October, 1829, found him at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he met the Tennyson brothers, and like them became a pupil of the Rev. William Whewell. He took several prizes for essays and declamations, during his college career, was one of the "Apostles," and seems to have left Cambridge in 1832, "trailing clouds of glory"—a man with a reputation. From this time, he lived at his father's house in London, at 67 Wimpole Street (see *In Memoriam*, VII). Obedient to the wishes of his father, he entered the Inner Temple, and applied himself to the study of law; and in October 1832 entered the office of an eminent conveyancer, where he remained until his departure from London the following summer on what proved to be his last journey. He went to Germany with his father in August 1833, thence to Vienna, where on the 15th of September he suddenly died. His relations with Alfred and Emilia Tennyson have been sketched in the introduction to this volume. They may be more fully studied in the following works: *Memoir of Arthur Hallam in Remains in Verse and Prose*, edited by Henry Hallam, London 1834, 1853, 1862, and Boston 1863; *The Youth's Companion*, 1898, LXXII, 1-3, article by W. E. Gladstone; *Daily Telegraph* (London) 1898, Jan. 5, "Personal Recollections of Arthur Hallam" by W. E. Gladstone; *The Athenaeum*, 1834, 606-7; *The North British Review*, 1851, XIV, 485-515 (by John Brown); *The Foreign Quarterly Review*, 1832, November; *The Morning Herald*, 1833, October 7 (notice of his death); Richard Le Gallienne, Introduction to Hallam's *Poems*, London 1893, pp. xiii-xxxix; John Brown, *Horae Subsecivae*, London 1858; Frances M. Brookfield, *The Cambridge Apostles*, N. Y., 1906; Mrs. Brookfield and *Her Circle*, N. Y. 1905; *Letters and Memorials of Richard Chenevix Trench*, London 1888; *Life of Richard Monckton Milnes, First Lord Houghton*, N. Y. 1891; *Autobiography of Dean Merivale*, London 1899; *Life*

of *Frederick Denison Maurice*, N. Y. 1884; Carlyle, *Life of John Sterling*, London 1851; *Life, Journals and Letters of Henry Alford*, London 1873; H. D. Rawnsley, *Memories of the Tennysons*, Glasgow 1900; *Dictionary of National Biography*, XXIV, 98 (article by Leslie Stephen), and above all, Hallam Tennyson's *Memoir of his father*, London 1897.

To the foregoing authorities on the life of Hallam should be added, of course, *In Memoriam*. Readers wishing comment and interpretation may consult:

A Key to In Memoriam, Alfred Gatty, London 1881; *In Memoriam: Its Purpose and Structure*, John F. Genung, London 1884; *A Commentary on In Memoriam*, A. C. Bradley, London 1901; *Prolegomena to In Memoriam*, Thomas Davidson, Boston 1906 (contains an index to the poem); *A Companion to In Memoriam*, E. R. Chapman, London 1888; *In Memoriam* (notes of editor, W. J. Rolfe) Boston 1895; *In Memoriam* (notes of editor, I. Gollancz) London 1905. The most important comment of all is Tennyson's own statement (see *Memoir* by Hallam Tennyson, London 1897, I, 304-307).

The following short studies of *In Memoriam* should not be overlooked: *Modern Language Notes*, VII, 157 (H. E. Shepherd) and IX, 129 (an important analysis of the poem) XXI, 229 and XXIV, 67 (two articles on the stanza form by E. P. Morton); *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, VI, 41 (an article by H. E. Shepherd); and "In Memoriam: A. H. H." in *Poetry Review*, XXIV, 479-81.

Hallam's poems may be read in the *Remains* edited by his father; *Poems by Arthur Henry Hallam*, ed. by Richard Le Gallienne, London 1893; in the edition of *In Memoriam* by I. Gollancz, London 1905; and in Hallam Tennyson's *Memoir of his father*, London 1897.

The best description of the church of St. Andrew at Clevedon, where Hallam was buried, is to be found in the Preface of Alfred Gatty's *Key to In Memoriam*, which also contains intimate details regarding Somersby and Bag Enderby. The well known bust of Hallam by Francis Chantrey is shown in a frontispiece engraving in the *Key*.

In Memoriam was published by Edward Moxon in 1850, a slender volume of 210 pages, bound in dark brown cloth, and priced at six shillings. Two other editions were issued in the same year. All contained, in addition to the introductory and concluding poems, 129 numbered sections only (eventually increased to 131). The numbered sections were apparently written between the autumn of 1833 and the spring of 1836. The concluding poem, or Epithalamium, was written in 1842, and bears the date 1849, when it was printed. A fourth edition appeared in 1851, containing 130 sections (section 58 being added). No further change was made until 1871, when, in the first complete edition of Tennyson's works, was added a 39th section not included in this volume. According to Mr. Herne Shepherd, a "trial"

issue of *In Memoriam* was printed, previous to publication, with only 118 sections.

ODE ON THE DEATH OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON, 1852

Written at Twickenham, and first published on the day of the funeral, November 18. The Duke was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral.

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE, 1854

First printed in the *Examiner*, December 9, 1854, and afterward printed separately as a 4-page pamphlet, August 1855. Tennyson had been reading the first report of the *Times* correspondent, in which only 607 sabres are mentioned as having taken part in the charge on October 25, 1854. He said that the poem was founded on the phrase "some one had blundered." Only 195 returned from the charge—"not the 600." See also Theodore Sternberg, *Modern Language Notes*, Apr. 1923 (XXXVIII, 248-50) for sources of the poem.

THE DAISY, 1855

This poem is the record of a tour taken in 1851. It was written in a metre which Tennyson thought himself the inventor of. "So dear a life your arms enfold," refers to the late Hallam Tennyson, who was born August 11, 1852.

THE BROOK, 1855

Not the brook at Somersby, but an imaginary one. The brook which crosses the road near the rectory is referred to in *In Memoriam*, XCIV (second stanza) as audible at night from the lawn in front of the Tennyson home. In the *Ode to Memory*, Tennyson writes of it,

— Come from the woods that belt the gray hill-side
The seven elms, the poplars four
That stand beside my father's door,
And chiefly from the brook that loves
To purl o'er matted cress and ribbed sand,
Or dimple in the dark of rushy coves,
Drawing into his narrow earthen urn,
In every elbow and turn,
A filtered tribute of the rough woodland —

MAUD, 1855

The germ of this poem appeared in the *Tribute*, an annual, in 1837, in the lines,

"O that 'twere possible,
After long grief and pain,

To find the arms of my true love,
Round me once again!"

Sir John Simeon, years later, asked Tennyson to elaborate this into a story; hence the poem "Maud." Many of the descriptions of nature are taken from observations of natural phenomena around Farringford, although the localities in the poem are all imaginary (note by Hallam Tennyson). The following analysis is based upon that left in manuscript by Tennyson himself (*Memoir*, I, 402-5).

Part I

- I. Before the coming of Maud.
- II. First sight of Maud.
- III. Visions in the night.
- IV. Cynicism after fancied disdain.
- V. His growing passion for Maud.
- VI. First interview with her.
- VII. He remembers his father talking with her father before her birth.
- VIII. Was she too proud to return his bow? *→ Cupid's bow, not salutatory*
- IX. He sees the young lord.
- X. This was called an attack on John Bright. Tennyson denied that it was, and declared that he made his hero condemn only the peace-at-all-price men.
- XI. First suggestion of his madness.
- XII. Interview with Maud in the wood.
- XIII. Prophetic of disaster. Maud's brother fails to recognize him.
- XVI. He decides to declare his love.
- XVII. His love returned.
- XVIII. Song of the enraptured lover.
- XIX. Premonitions of disaster.
- XXI. Before the grand political ball.
- XXII. The meeting in the garden.

Part II

- XXIII. After the duel with Maud's brother.
- XXIV. The refugee in Brittany. *Lamech*—see *Genesis*, IV, 23.
- XXV. Feels himself going mad.
- XXVI. Haunted after Maud's death.
- XXVII. In the madhouse. "The gray old wolf" is Maud's father, the "keeper," her brother, while the "dead man" is himself. The second corpse is Maud's brother and the first, his own father, whom he thinks Maud's father killed.

Part III

The lover is sane again but his life shattered. This section contains prophecies of war—the Crimean War which followed—against the "giant liar,"

Nicholas I of Russia, who was trying to dismember Turkey.

It was chiefly for these passages in Part III that Tennyson was accused of inciting war. See *Tennyson's "Maud" Vindicated; an Explanatory Essay*, by Robert James Mann, 1856, for a defense which the poet welcomed.

TITHONUS, 1860

First published in the *Cornhill Magazine* (February). Tithonus was loved, according to the old legend, by Aurora, who gave him eternal life but not eternal youth. He grew old but could not die. Finally, he was turned into a grasshopper.

IN THE VALLEY OF CAUTERETZ, 1864

Written on a visit to the valley which he had visited with Hallam in 1830, when they carried succor to the Spanish revolutionists. For references to this visit, see also *In Memoriam* LXXX; and *Ænone*.

BOADICEA (Boudicea) 1864

Written at Farringford in 1859 (*Memoir*, I, 436). The metre was an "echo of the metre in the 'Atys' of Catullus." Compare the poem on the same subject by Cowper. Boadicea, according to ancient story, a queen of the Iceni in Britain, having been shamefully abused by the Romans, who ravished her two daughters, incited an insurrection of the Britons against their oppressors, during the absence of Suetonius Paulinus, the Roman governor. She took the Roman colonies, one by one, including London and Colchester, and destroyed nearly 70,000 Romans and their allies. At last, however, she was defeated with great loss by Suetonius Paulinus, and took her own life, in the year 62 A.D. (Tacitus, *Ann.* XIV, 31). The story greatly attracted Tennyson, although Cowper's poem on the same subject may be regarded as more successful.

WAGES, 1868

First published in *Macmillan's Magazine* for February, the poem is expressive of Tennyson's moral idealism, and contains implications of his doctrine of free-will. The reward of virtue is not the reward of the warrior, but rather "to fight, to struggle, and to right the wrong." Philosophically, Tennyson was an idealist, if a very individual one.

THE HIGHER PANTHEISM, 1869

Written for the Metaphysical Society. It is a speculative poem. Tennyson here deals with the problems of

ontology—the ultimate nature of reality, and the relation of the finite with the Infinite, two of the most important fundamental problems of metaphysics. Tennyson seems to hold that all reality, in the final analysis, is mentality or mind; mind is the only kind of being.

"FLOWER IN THE CRANNIED WALL," 1869

The flower was plucked out of a wall at "Waggoners Wells," near Haslemere (note by the author). First published in the "Holy Grail" volume. Woolner's splendid heroic statue of Tennyson in the cathedral yard at Lincoln shows him holding a flower in his hand.

THE BRIDESMAID, 1872 (written in 1836)

The bridesmaid was Emily Sellwood, who afterwards became the poet's wife. Tennyson had met her originally with Hallam, when her family had driven over from Horn-castle, their home, to visit Somersby, in 1830. The event referred to in the poem is the marriage of Louisa Sellwood, a younger sister, to Charles Tennyson, Alfred's next older brother. The wedding took place at Horncastle, in St. Mary's church, May 24, 1836.

IN THE GARDEN AT SWAINSTON, 1874

Swainston was the home of Tennyson's very good friend, Sir John Simeon, and was situated at Freshwater, near Farringford. Most of the poem "Maud" was written in this garden. Sir John died at Freiburg in 1870. This poem was written within a week of this event. The "three dead men" were Hallam, Henry Lushington (d. 1855) and Sir John Simeon.

THE VOICE AND THE PEAK, 1874

Part of this poem was written in the Val d'Anzasca (in September 1873) which Tennyson described as the "grandest" valley that he had seen in the Alps (*Memoir*, II, 149).

THE REVENGE; A BALLAD OF THE FLEET, 1878

Published originally in the *Nineteenth Century*, March 1878, under the title "Sir Richard Grenville." Afterwards included in *Ballads and Poems*, 1880. Tennyson wrote to his wife: "Sir Richard Grenville, in one ship, *The Revenge*, fought fifty-three Spanish ships of the line for fifteen hours: a tremendous story, out-rivalling Agincourt." See Robert Louis Stevenson's account of the battle in *Virginibus Puerisque*. *The Revenge* was the same ship in

which Drake had sailed against the Armada, three years before.

RIZPAH, 1880

For the title, see *2nd Samuel*, XXI. The poem was founded upon a gruesome incident of the eighteenth century, which Tennyson had read about in a penny magazine, *Old Brighton*.

DE PROFUNDIS, 1880

Begun at the birth of his son Hallam, August 11, 1852, and first published, 1880, in the *Nineteenth Century*. The poem takes the form of two greetings to the child—the first considers the appearance of things in the child's life, the second the reality of the child's life and its meaning. It suggests the two great mysteries of life: individuality and the fact of free-will, or the power to shape our lives consciously.

THE ANCIENT SAGE, 1885

Tennyson considered this one of his best later poems. It illustrates the mysticism of Tennyson, and should be compared with a juvenile poem, "The Mystic" (see *Globe* edition, notes, 975). The sage reads portions of the manuscript which he has taken from the hands of his follower, and makes his own comments thereupon, with a view to demolishing the skepticism of the young man. It should be noted in this poem, as elsewhere, how much of his inspiration Tennyson drew from philosophy.

IDYLLS OF THE KING, 1857-1885

For comment and interpretation refer to: Richard Jones, *The Growth of the Idylls of the King*, Phil. 1895; M. W. Maccallum, *Tennyson's Idylls of the King and Arthurian Story*, N. Y. 1894; Morton Luce, *A Handbook to the Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, London 1895; E. K. Chambers, *Arthur of Britain*, London 1927; W. Lewis Jones, *King Arthur in History and Legend*, Cambridge 1911; Harold Littledale, *Essays on Tennyson's Idylls of the King*, London 1907; G. H. Maynadier, *The Arthur of the English Poets*, Boston 1907; Henry Elsdale, *Studies in the Idylls of the King*, London 1878; Vida L. Scudder, *Le Morte Darthur of Thomas Malory and Its Sources*, N. Y. 1917; Tom Pete Cross, *Tennyson as a Celticist*, *Modern Philology*, Jan. 1921, XVIII, 485-92, and *The Passing of Arthur*, *Manly Anniversary Studies* (Chicago 1923) 284-299; *On the Building of the Idylls*, in *Literary Anecdotes of the 19th Century*, Nicoll and Wise, II, 217 ff; and F. S.

Boas, "*The Idylls of the King*" in 1921, *Nineteenth Century*, Nov. 1921, XC, 819-830.

THE PLAN OF THE POEMS

Hallam Tennyson is authority for the statement that his father carried a more or less perfected scheme of the *Idylls of the King* in his head for thirty years, before publishing any of the stories. See Globe Edition, 1898, 943-945, for notes and scenes dating as early as 1833.

After the publication of his *Morte D'Arthur* (Written 1835) which appeared in the *Poems* of 1842, Tennyson's first installment of the *Idylls* was issued privately in 1857, under the title *Enid and Nimuë* (See Leicester Warren, *Fortnightly Review*, October 1865). This small "trial" edition, privately printed, contained the two stories of Enid and Vivien (Nimuë). It was followed in 1859 by the *Idylls of the King*, containing these stories with the tales of Elaine and Guinevere added. A revised edition, with the Dedication to the late Prince Consort, appeared in 1862. Seven years later four new stories—"The Coming of Arthur," "The Holy Grail," "Pelleas and Ettarre," and "The Passing of Arthur" (The "Morte D'Arthur" revised, with 199 added lines)—were included in a volume known as *The Holy Grail and Other Poems*. "The Last Tournament" was contributed to the *Contemporary Review*, December 1871; and, considerably altered, appeared with "Gareth and Lynette" in a small volume dated 1872. Finally, "Balin and Balan" was among the contents of the *Tiresias* volume, 1885. Only in the collected edition of the poet's works (1871-72) are the *Idylls* to be found, in order, during his lifetime. "The Marriage of Geraint" and "Geraint and Enid," originally one poem, were separated in the edition of 1888.

SOURCES

The stories of Guinevere, the Last Tournament, and Balin and Balan, are the most original of the idylls. In most cases, Tennyson based his stories on earlier romances selected from the great wealth of ancient Arthurian legend. The stories of Geraint and Enid were derived from the Welsh *Mabinogion* (which Tennyson had possibly read in the original as well as in Lady Charlotte Guest's translation). Evidence has been adduced to show that Tennyson drew from Nennius's *Historia Britonum* (c. 800), Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (1139), Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* (1485), and Ellis's *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances* (1805). The actual proportions in which he was indebted to each of these will never be known, perhaps. He was conversant with all of them, and with a great many other versions of the Arthurian stories. What he borrowed of plot or character, he made his own by

adaptation. Malory's collection of stories appears to have been his most important source, however.

ARTHUR, THE KING

In the sixth-century struggle between Celt and Anglo-Saxon for the supremacy of Great Britain, it was said by early historians that Arthur "fought against them in those days, together with the Kings of the Britons, but he himself was a battle chief." His twelve victories were named by Nennius, in one of which "940 fell by his hand alone." Arthur, in the stories of Tennyson, emerged from many centuries of fact, fiction, legend and myth, as a Christian, a king, and a leader of the English. The scanty facts point toward an historic Arthur, who somehow identified himself with the Britons early in the sixth century, not as a king but as a war chief, and led them against the Saxon invaders. An obscure leader of a "temporary resurgence of the Britons" became not only the perpetual "embodiment of the British hope," but also the central figure of a body of story material that inspired Tennyson to write his most pretentious poetical work, and has continued to stimulate the imaginations of poets to our own day.

ROMANCES OF THE ROUND TABLE

The most important redactors of early romances, who put into literary form the material later used by Tennyson, were the following:

Geoffrey of Monmouth claimed to have received from Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, a collection of Breton stories about Arthur and other "kings," which Walter had brought from Brittany. Geoffrey, before 1139, remodelled and translated Walter's material, which he described as "an ancient book in the British tongue," into his Latin *Historia Regum Britanniae*. For political reasons he followed Nennius in flattering the Britons, by tracing their descent from "Trojan Brutus." He also gave further distinction to Arthur as a central figure, and represented him as a valiant military leader and a world conqueror.

Wace (c. 1155) a native of Jersey and teacher in Normandy, made a metrical translation of Geoffrey's work in the Norman-French dialect, *Le Roman de Brut*. He added certain details, including the Round Table, which he got from "fables of the Bretons." Wace also supplied the legend of the passing of Arthur, as well as the prophecy of his return.

Robert de Boron (c. 1190) identified the Last Supper of Christ with the Round Table, and introduced the Grail as an ultra-holy relic of our Lord. His *Joseph of Arimathea* is the earliest written statement we have of the preservation of the Grail by Joseph.

Layamon (c. 1200) added to his *Brut*, a poem based on Wace, in English alliterative verse, the fairy elements and the making and properties of the Round Table.

In the meantime, Chrétien de Troyes (c. 1150) a Champagne *trouvère*, had produced the first now extant Arthurian romance, his *Erec and Enide*. He and his followers contributed chivalric tone and literary finish to the legends. The doctrine of "courtly love," which taught the necessity of love outside one's domestic circle, and became a common ingredient in medieval romances, appears originally in the stories of Chrétien.

In the "Vulgate Cycle" of prose romances (c. 1330) which followed the shorter "Boron Cycle," the legends of Arthur, Merlin, and Lancelot are combined with the Christianized form of the Grail legend. (See E. K. Chambers, *Arthur of Britain*, London 1927, 158-165.)

Finally, Sir Thomas Malory (died 1471) translated and assembled the materials, from French sources largely, condensed them to one-tenth their original length, and produced his *Le Morte Darthur*, which Caxton published in 1485. Caxton was probably responsible for the arbitrary divisions into books and chapters, and possibly for certain marks of style. He further emphasized Arthur as the central figure.

The vitality of the Arthurian legends is almost without parallel in the history of literature. Many other English authors besides Tennyson felt their fascination. Notable versions of these tales are to be found in the works of Spenser, Thomas Hughes, Dryden, Matthew Arnold, William Morris, Swinburne, and our contemporaries, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Hardy, and Masfield; while it is known that Milton once considered writing an Arthurian epic.

THE ALLEGORY OF THE IDYLLS

The allegorical purpose of the *Idylls* as a whole was only gradually discovered by the author. It first became apparent in *The Holy Grail and Other Poems*, 1869. From this point, Tennyson's work was bent toward picturing the decline and dissolution of the Round Table, and the presenting of an ideal Christian king, Arthur. For this reason, the earlier stories are least symbolic in nature. In some cases, the last written, as "Gareth and Lynette" (although now, in order, the first of the *Idylls*), contained the most obvious allegory.

It should be remembered, however, that Tennyson warned his public against finding too much allegory in the *Idylls*; and such as one finds is very simple and easily apprehended by an attentive reader. The poet said, "There is no single fact or incident in the *Idylls*, however seemingly mystical, which cannot be explained as without any mystery or allegory whatever." (*Memoir*, II, 27). He preferred to think of

Arthur and Merlin and Vivien as real flesh-and-blood men and women, rather than moral abstractions.

The following hints and references may be helpful to readers—

The Table Round—seems to be of Celtic origin, inasmuch as Wace is the first of the redactors to mention it. In a recent article, Mrs. L. H. Loomis (*Arthur's Round Table, Pub. Mod. Lang. Ass.* XLI, 771-84) pointed out that in Christian art the table of the Last Supper was often round in form. She argued that the medieval pictures of the Last Supper influenced Robert de Boron's account of the Round Table (written more than thirty years after Wace) and she emphasized the fact that the conception of a round, common table was contrary to all the customs and traditions of the middle ages. Her theory is very suggestive, although many scholars do not accept it. Professor Brown has noted that however her theory affects Boron, it can have no bearing on the earlier Wace, who gave no sign of any association with the Table of Christ (A. C. L. Brown, *Modern Philology*, Nov. 1927, XXV, 242. See also, by the same author, another theory of the origin of the Round Table, *Modern Philology*, XXII, 116.)

Camelot—Tennyson said it might be regarded as "everywhere symbolic of the gradual growth of human beliefs and institutions."

Lyonnesse—A country of legend that lay between Cornwall and the Scilly Islands, and included Land's End—the common idea, and one held by Tennyson.

Samite—A rich silk stuff, inwrought with threads of gold and silver.

The Three Queens—Tennyson refused to assign them any definite symbolism. Interpreters of the poet have called them Faith, Hope, and Charity (or Love); or Charity, Abstinence and Truth, the three virtues noted by Malory as deficient in the Knights.

Avalon or *Avilion*—Originally the Celtic other world, but came to be identified with the ancient "isle of Glastonbury."

Excalibur—In the Middle Ages it was customary to name a warrior's sword.

The Lady of the Lake—In the old romances of Lancelot, the Lady of the Lake instructs him in the Christian faith. She apparently symbolizes Religion in a general way throughout the *Idylls*.

Caerleon upon Usk—The traditional capital of Arthur, the *Isca Silurum* of the Romans. This town in Monmouthshire was actually the permanent station, from 75 to 200 A.D., of the second Augustan Legion, one of the crack regiments of the Roman army of occupation. Recent excavations have brought to light the great barrack buildings in which the Roman legionaries were quartered (see F. J. Haverfield, *The Romanization of Roman Britain*, Oxford 1915).

Vivien—One of Tennyson's most original characters. For

her name, Tennyson was indebted to the old *Romance of Merlin* (see Globe Edition, 955, n). The story of *Merlin and Vivien* was based on a passage in Malory (Bk. IV, ch. 1) in which Merlin was said to dote upon one of the ladies of the lake (Nimue). The poet employed Vivien as the evil genius of the Round Table, and to introduce her into the completed scheme of the *Idylls*, he added the last story, *Balin and Balan*.

Broceliande—The name of a forest in Brittany, near St. Malo. Much of the detail of Tennyson's description, however, was taken from New Forest, which was near his home, "Farringford."

Astolat—Connected by some commentators with the town of Guilford, near the poet's home, "Aldworth."

The Twelve Battles—See the translation of Nennius in Giles' *Six Old English Chronicles*, 408 (Bohn Library).

Tintagel Castle—The ruins of the castle are still to be seen "by the Cornish sea," six miles from Camelford. The keep, the oldest part of the ruin, is probably Norman, but there may have been a Saxon and perhaps also a British stronghold on the site.

Almesbury—The abbey to which Guinevere retired, (now Amesbury) is about eight miles from Salisbury. The old abbey church is still standing. It is only one and one-half miles from Stonehenge.

The White Horse—Tennyson's reference to the weeding of the White Horse on the Berkshire hills is interesting, in view of the fact that only last summer (1929) lovers of Britain's antiquities performed a similar service. The Horse is a figure cut deep into the side of a chalk hill, eleven miles from Wantage. When kept free from weeds and grass it is visible for many miles. The white horse was the symbol of the Saxons or English, as the Raven was that of the Danes. This figure near Wantage is supposed to commemorate the victory of Alfred over the Danes in 871.

Aromat—Arimathea in Palestine, the home of Joseph, who, according to legend, received in the Grail the blood which flowed from the side of Christ on the cross.

Glastonbury—An ancient town, renowned in fable as the spot where Joseph of Arimathea founded the first Christian church in England, and as the Isle of Avalon, where King Arthur and Queen Guinevere were buried. In sober fact, Glastonbury Abbey can trace its foundations back to the sixth century, and is the "one great institution which bore up untouched through the storm of English Conquest, the one great tie which binds one race to the race which went before it, and which binds the church of the last 1300 years to the earlier days of Christianity in Britain." (See Willis's *Architectural History of Glastonbury Abbey*). The site of the Glastonbury Thorn, which was believed to have sprung miraculously from Joseph's staff, and to have always blossomed on Christmas Day, is marked, on Wearyall

Hill. (See J. A. Robinson, *Two Glastonbury Legends*, Cambridge, 1926.)

The Holy Grail, or San Graal, was thought to be the Holy Dish at the Last Supper, and is probably derived from *cratella*, a small bowl. It was also reputed to be the vessel in which Joseph of Arimathea caught the blood of Christ as He hung on the cross, and was said to have been brought by Joseph to England. Although given a Christian symbolism by later medieval writers, the Grail was probably once no more than a heathen magic vessel. Chrétien de Troyes, for example, in his *Percival* (c. 1175) where he mentions the Grail repeatedly, seems to regard it as a secular talisman, with only the slightest Christian coloring. But from Robert de Boron (1190) to our day the predominant interpretation of the Grail has been a Christian one. The earliest hero of the Grail quest was probably Percival, who later gave way to Galahad. In his use of the grail legends, as well as in his handling of the characters of the ancient stories, Tennyson, who was unquestionably familiar with all the important versions by various redactors, selected and used whichever details or versions of the stories suited his purpose. (See George Y. Wardle, *The Holy Grail*, in *Y Cymmrodor*, XVI-XVII, 1902.)

LOCKSLEY HALL, SIXTY YEARS AFTER, 1886

Dedicated to Lady Tennyson. To be connected with the earlier *Locksley Hall*. Tennyson declared the *dramatis personae* to be entirely imaginary. It was reviewed by Gladstone in the *Nineteenth Century* (January, 1887). The poem is a dramatic monologue in which the speaker (the youthful hero of *Locksley Hall* grown old) reviews his life for the benefit of his grandson, giving to it a certain ethical direction. Toward the end, the poem becomes a homily. It has been less highly valued by critics than *Locksley Hall*.

MERLIN AND THE GLEAM, 1889

"Gleam" signified, to Tennyson, the higher imagination; Merlin—the spirit of poetry. His son writes, "For those who cared to know his literary history he wrote *Merlin and the Gleam*." It was to Tennyson what the *Prelude* was to Wordsworth.

CROSSING THE BAR, 1889

Written in Tennyson's eighty-first year, when he was crossing the Solent on his way home to Farringford, after his serious illness of 1888-9 at Aldworth. He said "It came in a moment." His son called it the "crown" of his life's work.



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